

## **Editorial Board**

The Revd Dr Keith G Jones  
The Revd Docent Dr Parush R Parushev  
The Revd Dr Ian M Randall  
Lina Andronovienė MTh  
Dr Tim F T Noble

**Issued three times a year**

### **Subscriptions:**

€16 per year within Europe and the Middle East  
\$30 per year to the USA  
Individual copies 150 czk

Enquiries regarding subscriptions to [Denise@ibts.eu](mailto:Denise@ibts.eu)

Enquiries regarding articles to [Journal@ibts.eu](mailto:Journal@ibts.eu)

This periodical is indexed in the *ATLA Religion Database*® and it is also included in the full-text *ATLASerials*® (*ATLAS*®) collection. Both are products of the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606, USA  
email: [atla@atla.com](mailto:atla@atla.com), [www:http://www.atla.com](http://www.atla.com)

ISSN 1804 – 6444 (on line)

ISSN 1213 – 1520 (print)

Registration Number: MK ČR E 10511

**International Baptist Theological Seminary**  
of the European Baptist Federation, o.p.s.  
Nad Habrovkou 3, Jenerálka, Praha 6, CZ 164 00  
Czech Republic

IČO: 25741683

*Produced by the IBTS Journal Team*

# **The Hughey Lectures 2012**

## **Tangible Church: Challenging the Apparitions of Docetism**

to be presented by

**Dr Henk Bakker**  
**Vrije University, Amsterdam**

and held at IBTS, Prague, on

**5, 6 and 7 November 2012**

After the resurrection Jesus said: 'Touch Me and see, for a ghost does not have flesh and bones' (Luke 24:39; cf. I John 1:1-3; Ignatius *Ad Sm.* 3,2).

Ever since, the Christian church has struggled with its inclinations to Christological and ecclesial docetism. Baptists, too, have their types of docetic thinking and believing, such as certain modes of explaining Scripture, the Early Church, the rise of Constantinism and Judaism. In the

Hughey Lectures of 2012 these docetic tendencies will be accurately investigated and challenged, because Baptist life should be concentrated on Christocentric visibility, which is 'radical Christian materialism' (James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Ethics*, Vol. I, p. 97). In order to be true church, Baptist congregational life should act, confess and explore as a tangible church

Dr Henk Bakker serves in the Faculty of Theology of the Vrije University in Amsterdam as the specialist in baptistic theology. He is a noted writer and speaker in the contemporary debate on Baptist identity and practice

There will be three lectures, one each day on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, with a celebratory buffet on the Wednesday evening

A special programme of supporting events, short papers, and research colloquia will also be held on these three days. Please contact [CsenyiK@ibts.eu](mailto:CsenyiK@ibts.eu) for more information and the conference package

# **Journal of European Baptist Studies**

**Volume twelve**

**No. 3**

**May 2012**

## **Contents**

### **Editorial**

**4**

The Revd Dr Keith G Jones

### **Nineteenth-Century Bible Society Colporteurs in Eastern Europe**

**5 – 25**

The Revd Dr Ian M Randall

### **Living Hopefully in a World of Instant Gratification**

**26 – 38**

Fran Blomberg

### **Encountering deaf people and Levinas**

**39 – 48**

Sandra Daktaite

### **Book Reviews**

**49 – 52**

## Editorial

This final issue of volume twelve represents something of the breadth of the research interests of the IBTS community. They also represent different sub groups within our research community. The first article is penned by a Senior Research Fellow, the second by a doctoral student and the third by a Master's student who previously completed our Certificate in Applied Theology. So here, wrapping up our twelfth year of publishing the Journal we see how IBTS produces an enthusiasm for researching, writing and publishing which, we believe, demonstrates a strong research culture in our community.

Ian Randall, one of our Senior Research Fellows, has made a significant contribution to research into Baptist history and identity in Europe. On many occasions he has observed the importance of the colporteur, or Bible salesman, and the significance of that activity in the development of evangelical life and witness. One agency was the British and Foreign Bible Society, which had a wide range of agents throughout Europe. They had an official policy that their colporteur should not engage in evangelism as this may lead to the establishment of particular forms of church, which would be against the non-denominational ethos of the Society. In this article we are given an overview of the breadth of the work and the influence of many of the key colporteurs in the development of church life.

Then IBTS research student, Fran Blomberg, reflects on how contemporary Christians might live hopefully valuing simplicity and sacrifice in a world of instant gratification. Out of her experience as pastor of 'Scum of the Earth Church' in Colorado we gain some insight into this powerful challenge faced by the modern church in a world of consumerism, social networking and a culture seemingly devoted to hedonism and pleasure.

Finally, Sandra Dakartiate reflects on her experience of encountering people who are deaf within the context of 'Portikas', a contemporary expression of mission activity in Klaipeda, Lithuania, which seeks to build accessible bridges between theology, philosophy, the arts, dance and drama. Her experiences there cause her to ask important questions on how we accept 'the other'. Again, vital questions in our common European home.

**The Revd Dr Keith G Jones**  
Rector, IBTS

# Nineteenth-Century Bible Society Colporteurs in Eastern Europe<sup>1</sup>

Ian Randall

The British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), formed in 1804, became ‘one of the most dynamic and successful institutions spawned by the great evangelical awakening of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century’.<sup>2</sup> By 1820 it was the wealthiest of the religious societies in London.<sup>3</sup> The aim was ‘to encourage a wider circulation of the Holy Scriptures at home and abroad’. In its first fifty years the Bible Society issued nearly 28 million copies of the scriptures (in whole or part) in 152 languages and dialects. The majority of these versions were in the languages of Europe and Asia.<sup>4</sup> Henry Martyn’s translation of the New Testament into Farsi was published first by the Russian Bible Society in St Petersburg in 1815. The Bible Society was one very important channel through which currents of evangelical Christianity flowed into Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century. It founded a system of agencies in Europe and elsewhere, subordinate to the central office in London. In the second half of the nineteenth century a pattern of territorial ‘Agencies’ developed, with the establishment of permanent depots and the employment of travelling salesmen – ‘colporteurs’. Their responsibility was to sell and distribute Bibles, but evangelism was prohibited. The Bibles sold were to be ‘without note or comment’, so that there could be no allegations of denominational bias. In the second half of the nineteenth century there were well-known agents – William Nicholson for European Russia and much of Eurasia, Alexander Thomson in the Turkish Empire and Edward Millard in the Austrian Empire.<sup>5</sup> The focus of this article is on Bible distribution. In 1877 the BFBS stated that colportage was ‘the backbone of the Society’s work’.<sup>6</sup> I am examining the 1860s and 1870s, when Bible Society activities expanded considerably in the Central and Eastern areas of Europe. My particular interest is how the colporteurs engaged with the prevailing religious cultures.

---

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Emma Wild-Wood of the Henry Martyn Centre, Cambridge, and the Faculty at the International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, for the opportunity to present versions of this article.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Batalden, Kathleen Cann and John Dean, eds., *Sowing the Word: The Cultural Impact of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1804-2004* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2004), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Roger Steer, *Good News for the World: The Story of Bible Society* (Oxford: Monarch, 2004), p. 222.

<sup>5</sup> Batalden et al, *Sowing the Word*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> *British and Foreign Bible Society Annual Report, [BFBSAR] 1877*, p. 51. My sources for this paper are largely in the Bible Society Archives in Cambridge University Library, and I am grateful to Kathleen Cann and Onesimus Ngundu for the guidance they have given me in using the Bible Society material.

## In Orthodox Russia

The Russian Bible Society had been formed in 1812 with the blessing of Tsar Alexander I and was enormously successful, but was closed down by a decree of Tsar Nicholas I in 1826.<sup>7</sup> The situation changed again from 1855 under the reforming Tsar, Alexander II. He gave his blessing to a new translation of the Bible into Russian – the Synodal Bible (from the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church). The BFBS appointed William Nicholson to St Petersburg in 1860 and the St Petersburg Agency became especially important. Already in 1860 the Agency sought and received approval from the Bible Society committee in London to market the Synodal version of the Gospels produced in that year.<sup>8</sup> This period is of enormous significance in Russia, since 1861 saw the historic imperial decree, the Emancipation of the Russian Peasants, which dramatically changed the lives of almost 40% of the population of the Russian Empire. The Bible Society report for that year spoke of the emancipation of the serfs and also of 200,000 copies of the Gospels being distributed.<sup>9</sup> There is a link, since there was a great desire for reading material among the newly-freed peasants. Sergei Zhuk noted: ‘The main concern of peasants was their illiteracy’.<sup>10</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, BFBS agents directed almost the whole of the massive Russian colportage operation and the BFBS was the main purchaser of the Synodal New Testament. Under Alexander II and Aleksei Bobrinski, the Russian rail minister, colporteurs had free rail travel.<sup>11</sup> At the turn of the century the St Petersburg agency’s annual sales of the whole or part of the Bible amounted to more than a million copies.<sup>12</sup>

Although St Petersburg led the way as a centre of distribution of the Bible, another important centre, serving the South of Russia and later the Caucasus, was Odessa, a prosperous cosmopolitan city on the Black Sea. Here the major figure in the early 1860s was John Melville, who was probably born in Dundee, Scotland. It seems he began working in Odessa as an English teacher, but he became deeply involved in distributing the

---

<sup>7</sup> See J.C. Zacek, ‘The Russian Bible Society and the Russian Orthodox Church’, *Church History*, Vol. 35 (1966), pp. 411-437.

<sup>8</sup> Batalden, ‘The BFBS Petersburg Agency and Russian Biblical Translation, 1856-1875’, in *Sowing the Word*, p. 179.

<sup>9</sup> *BFBSAR, 1861*, p. 77.

<sup>10</sup> Sergei I. Zhuk, *Russia’s Lost Reformation: Peasants, Millennialism, and Radical Sects in Southern Russia and Ukraine, 1830-1917* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004), p. 223.

<sup>11</sup> S.K. Batalden, ‘Colportage and the Distribution of Holy Scripture’ in Robert P. Hughes and Irina Paperno, eds., *Late Imperial Russia* (Christianity and the Eastern Slavs, Vol. 2), California Slavic Studies, Vol. 17 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 83-5.

<sup>12</sup> Batalden, ‘BFBS Petersburg Agency’, p. 182.

Bible and tracts. He co-operated especially with the Mennonites, and a report from Melville to the Bible Society in 1859 speaks about distribution of scriptures by Mennonites he knew.<sup>13</sup> A description of Melville by one Mennonite is intriguing. He was ‘a Presbyterian of the old school, who still believed in predestination and eternal damnation, a typical Scotchman, tall spare and seemingly austere, but withal a most loveable character’.<sup>14</sup> Melville never worked directly for the BFBS, but his many contacts in southern Russia, the Caucasus, Armenia and as far as the borders of Persia were invaluable to the Society. In 1861, for example, he reported to the BFBS London headquarters: ‘The long contemplated effort should now be made for the good of the Caucasus. The Prince-Governor at Tiflis is a very liberal-minded man.... He lately asked pastor Rodt, who lives near Tiflis, to try what could be done to bring the mountain tribes under the influence of the Gospel.’<sup>15</sup> Right across this region, Melville encouraged and linked together groups of people who were eager to receive copies of the scriptures in Russian, usually brought by colporteurs.

One colporteur in Russia, Jacob Delyakov or Yacob Dillakoff, was very well known across many parts of Russia and beyond in this period, and he illustrates the kind of person recruited by the BFBS as well as the problems that the BFBS faced in Russia and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. An evangelical Armenian, who worked for the BFBS, said that Melville sowed and Delyakov reaped.<sup>16</sup> Delyakov came from north of Urumia in Persia, from a village in which Armenian and Nestorian Christians lived. In his autobiography, written originally in Syriac, Delyakov described how he experienced evangelical conversion through the American Presbyterian mission to Persia.<sup>17</sup> He wanted to go to the missionary school in Seir associated with three famous Presbyterian missionaries to Persia, Justin Perkins, D.T. Stoddard and Joseph Cochran, and during his studies there in the 1850s he was converted. He then visited parts of Russia, including Odessa, where he bought Bibles from Melville, distributed them, and also began to preach with considerable effect. He went back to Urumia to report on the work in Russia and in 1862 was ordained as a deacon of the Nestorian Church by Mar Yosep of Bohtan, with the intention that he would be a missionary who would support himself through trading. A year later Delyakov was back in Odessa and Melville spoke to him about joining the BFBS. However, the major problem was that BFBS colporteurs were

---

<sup>13</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1859, p. 63.

<sup>14</sup> P. Jansen, *Memoirs of Peter Jansen: the Record of a Busy Life: an Autobiography* (Beatrice, Neb.: Jansen, 1921), p. 25.

<sup>15</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1861, p. 82.

<sup>16</sup> *The European Harvest Field*, March 1935, pp. 3-7.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

not allowed to preach. They had to restrict themselves to distribution of the scriptures. For four years Delyakov travelled round parts of Ukraine and today's Moldova by horse and wagon. His distribution of Bibles was allowed, but the way he preached in Russian Orthodox villages led to his being arrested several times.<sup>18</sup>

During this period BFBS colporteurs in Russia were realising the potential of the different splinter groups from the Russian Orthodox Church – the famous Russian sectarians – since many of them wanted to read the Bible in the Russian language. One BFBS colporteur reported in 1864, a year after the whole New Testament had been produced in Russian, about his encounter with Molokans, a name derived from the Russian word for 'milk-drinkers' (perhaps because they drank milk during Orthodox fast-days or perhaps because they desired the 'milk' of the Word), in one village, Samara. His report said that they are 'an interesting Russian sect, who rest upon the Bible as the formulation of the faith and the principle of their life'. He was overwhelmed by the reception he received from these sectarians: 'In some Molokan homes I sold perhaps about twenty Testaments.' This was because people were buying for their children, friends and acquaintances.<sup>19</sup> From 1866 Delyakov began to work in Molokan villages. Russia was a country of villages, with only a few cities. Although Delyakov also began to meet German Baptists, he established a rapport with the Molokans, and wrote about their meetings: 'Every elder is free to give his interpretation of a passage [of the Bible] as he pleases, and sometimes there is noisy dispute'. The Molokans accepted the Apocrypha - which had been a matter of major controversy within the BFBS.<sup>20</sup> Delyakov spoke about the way various aspects of Russian Molokan worship took place. Some Molokans practised water baptism, while others did not, and Delyakov became engaged in arguing in favour of water baptism.<sup>21</sup>

Questions about water baptism among Molokans created considerable tension in 1867. One wealthy Molokan, Nikita Voronin, was concerned to understand what the New Testament itself taught about baptism, and he approached Delyakov about the issue. Delyakov introduced Voronin to Martin Kalweit, a Lithuanian who was part of the growing German Baptist movement, who had come to Tblisi from East

---

<sup>18</sup> *The European Harvest Field*, April 1935, pp. 4-6; May 1935, pp. 12-16; June 1935, pp. 8-11; Sept 1935, pp. 11-13.

<sup>19</sup> *BFBSAR, 1864*, pp. 81-2.

<sup>20</sup> The BFBS eventually withdrew funding from projects involving versions of the Bible with the Apocrypha.

<sup>21</sup> *The European Harvest Field*, Sept. 1935, p. 13.



Prussia, and who was engaged, part-time, in colportage. Although Delyakov was now a Nestorian minister,<sup>22</sup> he encouraged Voronin in his journey towards Baptist convictions. Voronin became the pastor of a new Baptist congregation in Tblisi. But the Bible Society did not want to be closely associated with groups that were sectarian, whether the traditional Molokans or the emerging Baptists, since it was operating in Russia with the help of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. When colporteurs went to major events such as fairs to sell New Testaments, those who bought them were largely Russian Orthodox.<sup>23</sup> In 1867 a colporteur reported in one Russian city that ‘Russian [Orthodox] clergy (inclusive of the Bishop) purchased for the bookshop, established a short time since for the sale of religious books, no less than 300 New Testaments at one time’. There were also sales of New Testaments in monasteries and convents.<sup>24</sup> In 1868 a Russian Orthodox merchant bought 342 New Testaments for his workmen.<sup>25</sup> William Nicholson saw clearly that the massive work he was directing was vulnerable if it came to be associated with sectarianism. He cultivated and came to be respected by the head of the Holy Synod, Konstantin Pobedonostev.<sup>26</sup>

In 1874, Yacob Delyakov married a widow who was a Molokan, and at that point he agreed to a request from the BFBS to become a paid colporteur. His stepson, Ivan Zhidkov, became his helper and successor in this work.<sup>27</sup> The 1877 Bible Society Annual Report described Delyakov as a ‘remarkable man’. It wrongly stated that he was born in Syria (this was a confusion because of the Syriac language), but rightly noted that he had become a Russian subject and could talk to Russians and to Muslims. Delyakov was travelling widely and his sales of New Testaments were high. One of his own reports of that year was of a visit to a prison: ‘Today the governor of the goal... invited me into the inner court, that I might offer God’s word to those in confinement. He recommended the purchase of my books as being good and cheap.’ Forty copies were bought.<sup>28</sup> In the following year one of Delyakov’s BFBS projects was working with Cossack soldiers in Kishenev, Moldova. He described how 10,000 copies of the scriptures were unloaded at the Kishenev railway station and taken

---

<sup>22</sup> In 1867 he was ordained a minister of the Nestorian Church by Mar Yohannan: *The European Harvest Field*, Sept. 1935, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1866, pp. 95-6.

<sup>24</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1867, pp. 116-17.

<sup>25</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1868, pp. 106, 111.

<sup>26</sup> Batalden, ‘The BFBS Petersburg Agency’, p. 194.

<sup>27</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1877, p. 124. Zhidkov was a colporteur in the Lower Volga for eight years, but the BFBS dismissed him in 1885 because of his promotion of Baptist beliefs.

<sup>28</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1877, p. 124.

into the Society depot before going out to the soldiers.<sup>29</sup> But colportage was not enough for Delyakov, and this was the problem that the BFBS faced with many colporteurs. James Watt, who took over the Bible depot in Odessa (from Melville), despite being careful about BFBS rules, drew Delyakov into conversations with the Church Missionary Society in 1879 about mission in Persia.<sup>30</sup> In the same year Delyakov travelled to St Petersburg and joined in evangelical meetings organised by Colonel Vasily Pashkov (a close friend of the Tsar), and stayed with Count Bobrinsky. Colonel Pashkov was interested in how the Molokans could be drawn into the evangelical fold. For the Presbyterian Watt, Molokans held ‘extreme views’,<sup>31</sup> while Delyakov had such warm relations with them that he was invited to lead a Molokan community.<sup>32</sup> In the event, however, Delyakov became a Baptist, identifying himself explicitly with ‘the Baptists of England and the church of Mr Spurgeon’.<sup>33</sup> Here was a BFBS colporteur encouraging Baptist life in the Russian Orthodox context.

## The wider Orthodox world

The Bible Society colporteurs worked in several Orthodox contexts outside Russia, each of which had their own features. The situation in Bulgaria was a relatively open one. A BFBS report in 1860 said: ‘In the [Orthodox] churches in many parts of Bulgaria, the reading of the New Testament in the vernacular has become quite common. In one church, which for a long time had been almost deserted, the reading of the New Testament was commenced. The people who happened to be then present were delighted, and on returning to their homes spread the news that they had heard and understood God’s word. This aroused an interest in the whole neighbourhood, and now the church is well attended every Sabbath.’ Bulgarian Orthodox priests in each village were receiving a copy of the Bible, with some priests going round with BFBS colporteurs recommending people to buy books.<sup>34</sup> Progress in Bulgaria was linked with advance in education: people were interested in Bible reading. In 1835 the BFBS had contracted a Bulgarian monk, Neofit Rilski, to produce a new translation of the Bible. There was also a supply of colporteurs from among German Protestants in Bulgaria. German families had begun to arrive in Bulgaria and the Turkish government allowed them to settle in Tultscha

---

<sup>29</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1878, p. 95.

<sup>30</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1879, p. 107.

<sup>31</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1876, p. 85.

<sup>32</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1880, p. 115.

<sup>33</sup> *The European Harvest Field*, Sept. 1935, p. 18.

<sup>34</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1860, p. 93.

near the Danube River. Several were Baptists. Jacob Klundt and Martin Heringer were among the early Baptist settlers who became colporteurs. Klundt was imprisoned and kidnapped several times while serving in Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro, and he finally moved to Bulgaria. Heringer served the BFBS in Bulgaria for thirty years, from 1871 until his death.<sup>35</sup> There was considerable optimism about possibilities in this country, especially as, with the help of Russia, it threw off Ottoman rule.

Although there were Bulgarian Orthodox priests who were sympathetic to the Bible Society, in the minds of many Bulgarians the colporteurs were profoundly suspect because they were Protestants. In 1870 one of the colporteurs, Christian Krzossa, who was a Baptist from Prussian Poland, was invited to a service at an Orthodox Church. The man who invited him thought (as the story was recounted) that when Krzossa reached the church he would 'give unequivocal signs of being possessed' and that perhaps 'the sanctity of the [Orthodox] building would exorcise the demon'. Orthodox worship took place and after it was over Krzossa, for whom this was perhaps a new experience, raised the issue of the icons and in particular the way worshippers had been kissing them. When he asked what the icon signified, the reply was: 'This is the Lord Jesus'. In true Protestant fashion, Krzossa replied, 'that is not the Lord, but a piece of board'. The Bulgarian who had taken Krzossa into the church then took him to a priest and complained that the colporteur had shown no reverence for the icons and saints. Krzossa persevered with his arguments until – according to the BFBS report – the priest finally said: 'We are unlearned people, and only believe and practise what we have been taught. But it is good that you come and supply us cheaply with the Word of God, that we may be enlightened.'<sup>36</sup> This seems a most unlikely statement from an Orthodox priest and it is possible that Krzossa did not fully understand what was being said.

As the evangelical movement began to spread in Bulgaria, Protestant churches began to be formed. The activities of the Methodists and the Congregationalists were significant in the 1860s and 1870s. There was a Congregational high school and seminary in Samokov, Bulgaria, run by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. A good example of Congregational influence was in Kazanluk, where the first evangelical in the town, Stefan Kurdov, was a tradesman who, during a trip in 1867 to Constantinople, was converted through a group of Armenian Congregationalists. Upon his return home a Congregational church community was

---

<sup>35</sup> Teodor B. Oprenov, 'The Origins and Early Development of Baptists in Bulgaria', *Baptist History and Heritage*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (2007), p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1870, p. 165.

formed.<sup>37</sup> Links with the BFBS were then forged and Kurdov was appointed as a colporteur. However, the policy that Bible Society colporteurs would stay out of denominational issues was to prove, here as elsewhere, difficult to implement. In 1876, the European Turkey Mission (the Congregationalists) reported: 'At Kazanluk much apparent injury has been done by discussion and division on the subject of baptism'.<sup>38</sup> Another BFBS colporteur, a friend of Jacob Klundt and Martin Heringer, had visited the Congregationalist group in Kazanluk, suggesting a different understanding of baptism and sowing the seeds of Baptist views. Despite the strict rules that applied to colporteurs, Kurdov was behind a letter sent to German Baptists asking that someone should come and baptise those in the Kazanluk group who wished believer's baptism. The person who came was Ivan Kargel, who, when he arrived in Bulgaria, was met by Martin Heringer, who volunteered to be Kargel's guide and translator at his meetings. In 1880 five Bulgarians were baptised by Kargel.<sup>39</sup>

Although some Baptist activities caused tensions, there were Baptist colporteurs who had a good transdenominational understanding. An example was Franz Tabory, whose potential was identified in 1863 by Edward Millard, an influential BFBS figure who was also a Baptist. Alexander Thomson, a native of Arbroath, Scotland, a Free Church of Scotland minister (and former missionary to the Jews in Budapest), was head of the BFBS in the Ottoman Empire and spoke to Franz and Maria Tabory about BFBS work in Bosnia.<sup>40</sup> The Taborys were a Hungarian couple from Novi Sad (Serbia) who had gone to Bucharest, Romania, probably, like many others, to find work. They were part of the Nazarene movement (founded by a former Swiss Reformed Church pastor), but in Bucharest they met German Baptists. They were impressed and were baptised in 1862, and a year later responded to Thomson's challenge. Franz Tabory, working with Maria, had considerable success, initially in Sarajevo.<sup>41</sup> In 1865 he described one encounter, and the report indicates his ability to engage with Orthodox issues. He wrote: 'At Banya an Orthodox priest, who was also the Igoumen, or Abbot of a monastery, said to me that he was not at all pleased that the Word of God was distributed in this way "For now every stupid fellow will think that he knows the Bible and will

---

<sup>37</sup> A.W. Wardin, 'The Baptists in Bulgaria', *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 34 (1991), p. 149.

<sup>38</sup> 'European Turkey Mission', *Report of the Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston: BCFM, 1876), p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> G.L. Nichols, *The Development of Russian Evangelical Spirituality: A Study of Ivan V. Kargel (1849-1937)* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2011), pp. 82-7.

<sup>40</sup> *BFBSAR, 1864*, p. 119.

<sup>41</sup> Oksana Raychynets, 'Baptist Mission Efforts in Bosnia-Herzegovina: 150 Years of Discontinuity and Struggle', in K.G. Jones and I.M. Randall, eds., *Counter-Cultural Communities: Baptist Life in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), pp. 228-30.

pay no more attention to us, and our faith will be perverted”.’ Tabory responded that it was wrong to oppose circulating the Bible ‘for the Apostle Paul praised those who searched the Scriptures’. Tabory also quoted Orthodox bishops who commended circulation of the Scripture, in particular the Serbian Orthodox bishop from Novi Sad. At last the priest, apparently convinced, bought a New Testament and encouraged others to do the same.<sup>42</sup> Another colporteur recounted how an Orthodox Abbot urged parents and teachers at a local school to buy Bibles. ‘All’, said the Hegumen, ‘both males and females, should read and learn the Word of God.’<sup>43</sup> This was music to Baptist ears.

There was a perception among some adherents of Orthodoxy that there were cultural and educational advantages in connections with Britain. Two British women, Adeline Irby and Georgina Mackenzie travelled through continental Europe in 1859, with a view to meeting people in the South Slavic countries, who were largely unknown to British people. In 1865 they founded the ‘Association for the promotion of education among the South Slavic Christians in Bosnia-Herzegovina’ and set up a school in Sarajevo for the education of girls. During scripture lessons, teachers used translations of the New Testament and Psalms by Vuk Stefanović Karadžić and Đuro Daničić, the most able Serbian writers of the nineteenth century. It was the BFBS that had assigned the task of Bible translation to these and other scholars, and Peter Kuzmič has argued that the work of the BFBS and its colporteurs who distributed these Bibles ‘made a significant contribution to the religious and cultural progress of the South Slav peoples’.<sup>44</sup> The Sarajevo school had an adult literacy programme and promoted social activities among the poor. A similar appreciation of the contribution of the Bible Society to education was reflected in Romania, another largely Orthodox country. Some merchants in Bucharest were amazed, in 1863, at how cheap the books were that were being sold by the colporteurs. One compared the prices with what people paid if they bought from the Romanian Orthodox Patriarch. Another commented that some Romanians were recommending ‘our union as a country with Hungary, Italy or Russia’. He wanted ‘union with England’. All the merchants present purchased a New Testament.<sup>45</sup> The BFBS Annual Report in 1865 said there was no country in Europe with more freedom for colporteurs than

---

<sup>42</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1865, pp. 150-1.

<sup>43</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1875, pp. 125-6.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Kuzmič, ‘The Bible Society’s South Slavic Bible in the Balkan Maelstrom’ in *Sowing the Word*, p. 267; William Canton, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, Vol. III (London: J. Murray, 1910), p. 202.

<sup>45</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1863, p. 141.

Romania.<sup>46</sup> The Orthodox environment offered many advantages to colporteurs.

## The Catholic context

The appointment of Edward Millard by the BFBS as its representative in Vienna, covering the Austrian Empire, proved to be highly significant for Bible Society activity in the majority Catholic countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Millard was born in Bath, and was a teacher in the Netherlands from 1839 to 1845. He then had an evangelical conversion while in Germany, and became an employee of the BFBS in Cologne, where he became a Baptist. He stayed there for four years and in 1851 he was transferred to Vienna. However, he was forced to leave Vienna two years later when the police closed the Bible depot. He then spent four years working for the BFBS in Poland, followed by seven in Berlin and then returned to Vienna.<sup>47</sup> He had a growing interest in the whole central and eastern European region, including the South Slavic countries. He was in Zagreb, Croatia, in 1863, while still attempting to negotiate with the Austrian authorities to allow the Bible Society to operate from Vienna. In November 1864, having received permission from the government, Millard returned to Vienna and re-opened the Vienna Bible depot.<sup>48</sup> Soon Austrian newspapers began to speak about the work of the Bible Society. The picture painted was of a distinctly Protestant enterprise. 'If you want to get a Bible of Luther's version for nothing, you have only to apply.'<sup>49</sup> This was not the message that Millard wanted to be conveyed. Bibles were sold, not given away. In 1868 he assured an Austro-Hungarian government minister: 'All denominational as well as political tendencies are strictly excluded by the rules of the Society'.<sup>50</sup>

What Millard wanted was for the Austrian authorities to recognise that he was seeking to co-operate with all denominations, not least with Catholics. In 1864 and 1865 he devoted considerable energy to working with the government so that scriptures could be printed locally. This started in Vienna, in Pesth (today's Budapest) and Belgrade. Millard also travelled widely in Austria, Hungary, Bohemia and Poland. Although he was a committed Baptist, he met with representatives of as many denominations as possible, particularly those from the Lutheran, Reformed and Moravian

---

<sup>46</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1865, p. 151.

<sup>47</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1872, p. 64; cf. N.M. Railton, *No North Sea: The Anglo-German Evangelical Network in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 162-3.

<sup>48</sup> Canton, *History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, Vol. IV (1910), p. 335.

<sup>49</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1864, p. 54.

<sup>50</sup> Edward Millard, 6 August 1868, in *BFBS Agents Books*, No. 122, p. 17.

traditions. Wherever he travelled he took note of the different approaches of the ministers and churches. He described one Reformed church building in Bohemia as 'simple enough in its arrangements to satisfy the veriest Puritan' and noted that the old Psalms were sung with vigour.<sup>51</sup> In 1866 the BFBS Annual Report drew attention to 'the work which Mr Millard has been enabled, through God's mercy, to accomplish' and commented that this 'must ever constitute one of the most interesting chapters in the history of your Society'. During one year the circulation of scriptures had risen from 25,298 to 58,091. Warsaw and Prague depots opened and there was advance in Transylvania.<sup>52</sup> A year later the circulation of the scriptures was 150,000, with colporteurs operating from Vienna, Prague, Budapest, Transylvania, Belgrade and Warsaw.<sup>53</sup>

By the end of the 1860s Millard had forty-four colporteurs working for his agency. They were recruited from various denominations, with Lutherans, numbering twenty-two, being the largest group. Millard was keen to have colporteurs who could adapt to different contexts. He spoke about having to go from village to village, with one village being Hungarian-speaking, the next German, then Serbian and then Czech. Millard stated in 1869 that he needed colporteurs 'of superior attainments', and expressed his satisfaction that he had some like this, with good religious and other qualifications.<sup>54</sup> His Annual Report of that year indicated the variety of languages: colporteurs had sold over 41,000 Bibles, Testaments and Tracts in German, over 30,000 in Hungarian, over 16,000 in Czech and about 10,000 in other languages.<sup>55</sup> Millard was making unremitting endeavours to have government restrictions on BFBS work removed.<sup>56</sup> Many of Millard's colporteurs in this period had been trained in the interdenominational St Chrischona Pilgrim Mission, Basel, which was influenced by Lutheran Pietism. For Millard these colporteurs 'do credit to that establishment'. In his 1870 report he eagerly anticipated the next batch of recruits from St Chrischona.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, Millard held Baptist meetings in his home in Vienna and was involved in founding the first Baptist church in Austria.<sup>58</sup> These Baptist connections were to cause tensions.

---

<sup>51</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1864, p. 56.

<sup>52</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1866, pp. 63-4.

<sup>53</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1867, pp. 80, 94.

<sup>54</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1869, p. 97.

<sup>55</sup> Edward Millard, 1869 Report to BFBS Secretaries, in *BFBS Agents Books*, No. 122, p. 38.

<sup>56</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1871, p. 85.

<sup>57</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1870, p. 63.

<sup>58</sup> I.M. Randall, *Communities of Conviction: Baptist Beginnings in Europe* (Prague: EBF, 2009), p. 125.

Perhaps surprisingly, however, Millard encouraged the view that spiritual life was to be nurtured in the Catholic Church. In one Catholic community in Bohemia, he stated in 1869, 'many have been truly converted through the scriptures'.<sup>59</sup> In another village a whole group had been affected by reading the scriptures and it was reported that 'they have not joined any Protestant Church, but they meet under the direction of a person who is described to be a truly Christian man'.<sup>60</sup> Two years later Millard's Annual Report contained this 'remarkable' (as it was described) statement from a colporteur in Bohemia: 'At N\_<sup>61</sup> I met an old man, eighty years of age, a member of the Roman Catholic Church', and the colporteur described this man as 'a dear brother in Christ. The Lord has done great things through him, his light shines in all the neighbourhood. Through him I have circulated a large number of Bibles.' The report continued by saying that the Catholic 'brother' had expressly requested that his cordial greetings be sent to the Bible Society 'for the great benefit it is conferring through the dissemination of the Scriptures'.<sup>62</sup> In other cases evangelical conversion led people away from Catholicism. One colporteur in Bohemia had been brought up a Roman Catholic but had emigrated to America where he came – through Methodists – 'to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus'. His friends wanted him to stay in America but he returned to his native village in Bohemia to witness to friends and family. Brothers and sisters of his were brought to 'liberty in Christ' and one of them opened his house for meetings. 'His brother's home is now every Sabbath day the meeting place of a goodly number of souls gathered to listen to the Gospel message'. These meetings were evidently linked with a Protestant evangelical church.<sup>63</sup>

As far as possible, however, Millard gave accounts, not of those who left the Catholic Church, but rather of those Catholics who were deeply affected by reading the scriptures. He recalled his own Bible study group in Cologne which included Catholics and Protestants.<sup>64</sup> In Warsaw, Millard reported in 1870, a young man came to the Bible Society depot to tell his story. He had wanted to buy a Bible but did not have enough money. After telling the staff at the depot that he needed what money he had to buy a Christmas present for his sister, he was persuaded to buy the Bible as a Christmas present. He reported: 'I am quite different now and my sister too, and our relations also, who used to drink excessively, and then my poor

---

<sup>59</sup> Edward Millard, 1869 Report to BFBS Secretaries, in *BFBS Agents Books*, No. 122, p. 46.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>61</sup> The city is not named.

<sup>62</sup> Edward Millard, 1871 Report to BFBS Secretaries, in *BFBS Agents Books*, No. 132, pp. 39-40.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40-1.

<sup>64</sup> Railton, *No North Sea*, p. 162.



sister generally got ill-treated'. The change was due to the Bible.<sup>65</sup> The young man added in a further report that he was reading the Bible in his workshop and that work colleagues were also reading it.<sup>66</sup> Also in Warsaw, a celebrated doctor, who a few years previously was 'a decided opponent of the Bible, and strongly disapproved of its dissemination' had been reading the scriptures and had said that 'in his heart' he was now 'really a Protestant'.<sup>67</sup> An account of a dramatic encounter in 1873 came from one of Millard's colporteurs who arrived in a Czech village to find it was the feast of the consecration of the local Catholic church. People said to the colporteur: 'Who would think of saying their prayers today, do you not know that this is our festal day?' The colporteur 'advanced towards the middle of the dances, holding the Bible up on high, and shouting that he had brought then something that many of them, perhaps all of them, had never seen before. He succeeded in catching their attention. Gradually the dances stopped.' People 'grouped round the Bible, and 60 copies of the Bible were sold'.<sup>68</sup>

Millard applauded such intrepid colporteurs. One colporteur told Millard in 1872 that he had sold copies of the Bible in a factory in Brno, the main city of Moravia. Two weeks later he met someone in a village who had been lent a copy of one of the Bibles previously sold. It was reported to the colporteur that a Catholic priest had labelled the Bible a Protestant book that should be burnt. The destruction of Bibles by priests was commonly reported. This new Bible reader, however, testified: 'Whether the book is Protestant or not, I know not, but I found in it the very doctrine of our Lord and Saviour and I will never let it go.'<sup>69</sup> In 1874 it was reported that in Bohemia the Old Catholic movement, in breaking away from the Roman Catholic Church (a move that began in 1870), had given an impetus to Bible circulation and to debate. For example, a colporteur came across a group of Catholic priests who alleged that he had Protestant books. The colporteur embarked on a debate, asking - who was the first Protestant? The priests replied, 'Wycliffe', which might have given the colporteur opportunity to say something about links between John Wycliffe and Jan Hus. However, he replied only: 'I do not know very much about that personage', and added 'but now I want to tell you, the Lord Jesus was

---

<sup>65</sup> Edward Millard, 1869 Report to BFBS Secretaries, in *BFBS Agents Books*, No. 122, pp. 72-3.

<sup>66</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1870, pp. 104-5.

<sup>67</sup> Edward Millard, 1869 Report to BFBS Secretaries, in *BFBS Agents Books*, No. 122, p. 75.

<sup>68</sup> Edward Millard, 1873 Report to BFBS Secretaries, *BFBS Agents Books*, No. 143, p. 52. In 1871 there was a report of a Catholic priest who tore a Bible to tatters in the pulpit: *BFBS Annual Report, 1873*, p. 90.

<sup>69</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1872, pp. 70-1.

the first Protestant. He protested against all untruth and all hypocrisy.<sup>70</sup> In Bosnia, Franz Tabory was able to do better, carrying on (in 1876) a reasoned conversation about the papacy with the Prior of a Trappist Monastery. When the Prior heard Tabory preach, however, he was so upset that he gave Tabory 'a box on the ear'. He soon acknowledged he had erred and they parted with mutual respect.<sup>71</sup> Not all encounters ended so peacefully. In 1880 a Catholic priest in Bohemia (according to a colporteur) 'got into such a rage that he struck me on the chest with the Bible, so that I still feel the pain'. He added: 'It cost me a struggle to keep calm.' Millard commented: 'The colporteur is a tall, strongly built man.' The evangelicalism of the BFBS represented a challenge to some expressions of Catholicism.<sup>72</sup>

## Varieties of Protestantism

Political changes in Austria-Hungary in the later 1860s meant that there was much talk in Hungary about a 'free church in a free state'. Millard wrote to the Bible Society Secretaries in London about this, but was unenthusiastic about Catholics joining Protestant churches that, in his view, fostered unbelief.<sup>73</sup> As an example of what he meant, he instanced an encounter a colporteur had with a young Hungarian Reformed Church minister. This minister, having bought a cheap New Testament from the colporteur, proceeded to use leaves from it to light his cigar, announcing to the colporteur that the Bible contained 'more falsehood than truth'. The colporteur replied 'that he believed heartily it to be the very word of God' and the Reformed pastor called him 'an ass' and 'a bigot'.<sup>74</sup> In 1870 Millard described Austrian Protestantism as 'to a good extent but a negation of Romanism', and added that it was 'mostly very cold'.<sup>75</sup> He acknowledged exceptions, speaking of one Hungarian Reformed minister as 'one of the very best'.<sup>76</sup> Millard's generally gloomy view of the Reformed Church seemed to be confirmed in 1872 at Hungarian Protestant Association meetings, when one speaker was applauded after saying that the Apostles' Creed should be discarded. Liberal theology was promoted vigorously in the 1870s in Hungarian academic circles and one colporteur

---

<sup>70</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1874, pp. 58-9.

<sup>71</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1876, p. 97.

<sup>72</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1880, p. 56.

<sup>73</sup> Edward Millard, Letter to BFBS Secretaries, 6 August 1869, in *BFBS Agents Books*, No. 122, p. 105.

<sup>74</sup> Edward Millard, 1869 Report to BFBS Secretaries, in *BFBS Agents Book*, No. 122, p. 61.

<sup>75</sup> Edward Millard, Letter to BFBS Secretaries, 27 August 1870, in *BFBS Agents Books*, No. 122, p. 294.

<sup>76</sup> Edward Millard to Rev R.B. Girdlestone, 13 February 1871, in *BFBS Agents Books*, No 132, p. 5.

was very surprised to find theological students studying the Bible.<sup>77</sup> The theological crisis in Hungarian Protestantism created a movement – in reaction – seeking to bring evangelical renewal. At the time when Millard was reporting on the advance of liberalism, one of his colporteurs, Antal Novák was describing ‘remarkable awakenings’ in Hungary.<sup>78</sup>

Antal Novák had worked as a tailor in Budapest where he and his wife had experienced evangelical conversion. They then began to distribute Bibles, and the BFBS employed them both. They began work in 1865 and moved to the South East of Hungary, at the invitation of the local Reformed minister. Although he asked for a colporteur, it seems that the minister probably wanted a teacher in the local school, due to the Reformed parish’s lack of money to employ one. After moving there, Antal Novák cultivated a good relationship with the minister, and in 1868 donated a Bible for the congregation. Novák visited other villages and towns in the region, and several ‘peasant Bible study groups’ – later known as ‘peasant ecclesiolas’ were established. The Nováks became increasingly convinced of Baptist views, especially through their contacts with Edward Millard and with Johann Rottmayer, another colporteur who was a Baptist, and in 1870 they travelled to Vienna and were baptised. In itself this was not an issue for the Bible Society, but five years later a number of those in one of the Bible Study groups with which Anton Novák was connected asked for believer’s baptism and Novák arranged for Heinrich Meyer, a powerful German Baptist figure who for a time worked for the BFBS, to come and baptise them and form a Baptist church. From this church, the Hungarian Baptist movement grew significantly. One Hungarian historian wrote an essay entitled: ‘Bibles, Bible groups, Baptists’.<sup>79</sup> If Millard, as head of the agency had not himself been a Baptist, this development would have been seen in a very negative light, and Millard himself was criticised, as we will see, for his Baptist sympathies.

Johann Rottmayer was another Baptist colporteur who was seeking to negotiate his way through Hungarian Reformed communities. He and Novák met through their work, as both had small businesses. Rottmayer had encountered the evangelical faith at the Baptist church in Hamburg, while working there as a carpenter, and Novák was one friend whom he influenced. Later it was Novák who introduced Rottmayer to the Bible Society at a time when Rottmayer’s carpenter workshop in Budapest was

---

<sup>77</sup> A.M. Kool, *God Moves in a Mysterious Way: The Hungarian Protestant Foreign Mission Movement, 1756-1951* (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum B.V., 1993), pp. 49, 137.

<sup>78</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1873, pp. 100, 102.

<sup>79</sup> For these developments see I. Gergely, ‘Hungarian Baptist Beginnings: The Struggle for Identity’, *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2000), pp. 19-30.

failing, and Rottmayer began working with the Reformed church in Transylvania as a colporteur. Rottmayer was very successful in his work in towns and villages. Unusually, he reached out to gypsies. In 1871 Rottmayer told a gypsy musician that Christian people gave money for the scriptures to be disseminated 'and that they pray for gypsy people too'. The gypsy's joy, it was reported by Rottmayer, was great.<sup>80</sup> In one of his reports to the Baptist church in Hamburg, Rottmayer wrote that in a single year he was able to sell more than 10,000 Bibles.<sup>81</sup> It is significant that he was reporting to Hamburg. Although he was employed by the Bible Society, his Baptist convictions were strong. After a time Rottmayer realised that the need for Bibles was much greater than he alone could supply. At his suggestion no less than five more people were employed by the Bible Society. Significantly, all of them were or became Baptists.<sup>82</sup>

While the relationship of the Bible Society to theologically liberal Reformed Church ministers was at times a difficult one, Millard had supportive contacts within Lutheranism. In 1869 he was very involved in the case of a Lutheran Countess from Estonia who was distributing Roman Catholic editions of the New Testament in Austria. The Roman Catholic (Leander van Ess) translation of the Bible into German was widely used. The local Catholic Dean had it proclaimed in his parishes, however, that Protestants were 'disseminating immoral books, in order to seduce the people'. Millard's report on these events to Samuel Bergne, one of the Secretaries of the BFBS in London, said this claim was 'preposterous' and was a 'slap in the face of religious liberty'. Millard told the Countess to engage the best lawyer as the case was coming to court.<sup>83</sup> The highest Austrian tribunal decided against her.<sup>84</sup> In this period some of Millard's colporteurs were being roughly handled and fined and in one case a colporteur's body was found stripped and mutilated.<sup>85</sup> In 1871, after years of negotiation, the authorities granted legal recognition to colporteurs in many parts of Austria-Hungary, including Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia.<sup>86</sup> A petition by the Synod of the Lutheran Church in Bohemia had a salutary

---

<sup>80</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1871, p. 65.

<sup>81</sup> Ioan Bunaciu, *Istoria Rasparidirii Credintei Baptiste in Romania*, [The History of the Baptist Faith in Romania], (Editura Uniunii Comunitatilor Crestine Baptiste din R.S. Romania, Bucurestu, 1981), p. 86, cited in I. Gergely, "'A Community of People where the Gospel is Deeply Rooted': An analysis of Hungarian Baptists in Transylvania from their beginnings to the end of the Communist regime" (University of Wales PhD thesis, 2009), p. 44.

<sup>82</sup> These were Gáspár Barabás, György Fleischer, János Grómen, Mihály Grómen and Dávid Solti. See Randall, *Communities of Conviction*, p. 140.

<sup>83</sup> Edward Millard to Samuel Bergne, 6 July 1869, in *BFBS Agents Books*, No. 122, p. 5.

<sup>84</sup> Edward Millard to BFBS Secretaries, 13 July 1869, in *BFBS Agents Books*, No. 122, p. 93.

<sup>85</sup> Canton, *History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, Vol. III, p. 195.

<sup>86</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1871, p. 85.

effect on the situation there.<sup>87</sup> Colporteurs did not, however, present themselves as Lutherans. August Meereis, one of Millard's colporteurs in Bohemia, came from a Czech Lutheran family but became deeply involved in Baptist life. In 1876 a colporteur in Bohemia said that he had carried a Lutheran Bible around for weeks but no-one would buy it: only Catholic Bibles would work.<sup>88</sup>

Yet Lutheran contacts were vital. When Franz and Maria Taborý moved to Sarajevo, their support in fellowship and devotional reading of the Bible came from a group of mainly German-speaking foreigners, many of whom had a Lutheran background. But the Taborý Bible study group became a Baptist congregation, the first Baptist church in the whole of what was later Yugoslavia. The Baptist witness in Sarajevo was later strengthened by Adolf Hempt, from Novi Sad, who (like the Taborýs) had been a Nazarene and became a Baptist and a colporteur of the BFBS. Among those who joined the Sarajevo church were teachers who worked in the Christian school and in the orphanage run by Adeline Irby. In the 1870s Alexander Thomson, head of the BFBS in the Ottoman region, became interested in the school.<sup>89</sup> In 1876, after a rebellion by the Christian population of Herzegovina against their rulers, the Russo-Turkish war broke out, and Taborý and other colporteurs became caught up in the devastating conflict. The Bible Society received rights to work among soldiers. The Serbian War Office gave them permission to visit military hospitals. In these hospitals, colporteurs distributed thousands of copies of the scriptures among soldiers and officers. Taborý and others helped many refugees who had left their homes and come to Sarajevo. They not only gave them the scriptures but also bought food, blankets and shoes. During the two-year war over 242,000 copies of the scriptures, in fifteen languages, were distributed among the troops in the Balkans.<sup>90</sup> The Bible Society became, for a time, part of a significant relief effort supported by the wider Protestant world.

## The Bible Society and Evangelicals

The Bible Society was a product of the evangelical movement of the eighteenth century. This gave strength to the Society, but could also cause tensions because of the tendency to fissiparity within evangelicalism. An example is a *contretemps* between Edward Millard and an Irish Presbyterian Church missionary, Dunlop Moore, who came to Vienna as a

---

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>88</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1876, p. 41.

<sup>89</sup> Raychynets, 'Baptist Mission Efforts in Bosnia-Herzegovina', pp. 230-2.

<sup>90</sup> Canton, *History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, Vol. III, pp. 204-8.

missionary to the Jews. From the beginning Moore failed to establish a harmonious relationship with the Bible Society and he was seen in 1869 as operating in an unfriendly way.<sup>91</sup> On 17 May 1870 Moore wrote to the President of the Society, Lord Shaftesbury, to explain that he had been a missionary in India and had worked with the Bible Society there, but he alleged in his letter that in Vienna the BFBS did not have the 'unsectarian character which is the design of its supporters' but that instead 'the great Bible Societies of England and Scotland' had, through the local agents, become 'mixed up with Baptist propaganda'.<sup>92</sup> Millard was now named. Moore made the accusations that Millard's assistants in Vienna were Baptists and that he was holding Baptist meetings in his home, and he claimed that Millard's 'public position is incompatible with the work of the Propagandist of the peculiarities of his denomination'. At one meeting, at which Moore was present, he was astonished when Millard urged all present 'to have themselves immersed after the usage of the Baptists'. When Moore spoke to Bible Society supporters in Austria-Hungary about this strong Baptist influence they were, he said, astonished when told that Baptists were a small part of BFBS support in England.<sup>93</sup>

This letter to Shaftesbury went to Samuel Bergne who asked Moore if it could go to Millard himself, and Moore agreed. In response, Millard wrote to the Secretaries of the Bible Society in London on 30 May 1870. Moore's allegations were, he stated, 'utterly unfounded'. The Bible Society Committee had known him for twenty-three years. What Moore said was 'full of the grossest misrepresentations'. As regards the Baptist addresses that Moore had heard, Millard said they were given in his own house. The context was family worship, with others - friends - present. Moore, said Millard, had repeatedly been at the house. On the question of the staff working for Millard, they included those from Lutheran and Reformed churches, as well as Baptists.<sup>94</sup> A month after this robust defence by Millard was despatched, he wrote (on 30 June) to the London Secretaries to thank them for what he now understood was their vindication of his position.<sup>95</sup> In August 1870 Millard said Moore was withholding any fellowship with BFBS personnel, but a month later Millard spoke of 'peace restored'.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> Edward Millard to BFBS Secretaries, 7 July 1869, in *BFBS Agents Books*, No. 122, p. 104.

<sup>92</sup> Edward Millard, Report to BFBS Secretaries, in *BFBS Agents Books*, No. 122, pp. 236-7.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 237-8.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 244-8.

<sup>95</sup> Edward Millard to BFBS Secretaries, 30 June 1870, in *BFBS Agents Books*, No. 122, p. 283.

<sup>96</sup> Edward Millard to BFBS Secretaries, 25 August and 28 September 1870, in *BFBS Agents Books*, No. 122, pp. 304, 308.

This intra-evangelical dispute did not, however, go away entirely. It was Millard's recruitment of the outspoken Baptist, Heinrich Meyer, which sparked off a further investigation. Meyer was converted in 1861, through the Hamburg Baptist church. His leadership gifts were recognised and in 1869 he moved to Odessa, Ukraine, as a missionary. He undertook mission in Odessa, but he wanted to work in the Balkan countries among people who spoke his native languages, German and Hungarian. Through Millard, Meyer obtained the job of BFBS colporteur in Zagreb, where he moved in 1872. Meyer's wife and co-worker was Matilda Michelson, a German-speaking Mennonite. Even though he had received instructions not to do anything except sell Bibles, Meyer started a Bible study group.<sup>97</sup> His views, as an outspoken Baptist, brought him into conflict with another local BFBS representative, Christian Palmer. Millard was accused, as he had been by Moore, of breaking the rules of the Bible Society by allowing Meyer to spread Baptist views. On this occasion Alexander Thomson was appointed by the Society to undertake an examination of the situation. Thomson wrote in a letter to the Committee:

There is no proof that there has been any undue leaning toward Baptist Selection. At the same time it must be recollected that as the Baptists are perhaps more active than any other body in labouring in Austria for the real conversion of souls it follows that many of that persuasion offer themselves for Colportage, offers which Mr Millard does not see it his duty to dismiss when he can assign no other reason than that they come from the Baptists.<sup>98</sup>

Although Millard was cleared of wrong-doing by the BFBS, the situation for Meyer in Zagreb had become untenable. Millard himself was being praised for his twenty-five years of service to the Bible Society, in which under his superintendence almost two and a half million copies of the Bible (in whole or part) had been issued.<sup>99</sup> He was now responsible for forty-two staff. Among these, Meyer was in danger of becoming a liability, but Millard was not prepared to abandon him and moved him to Budapest on 5 March 1873.<sup>100</sup> Millard always remained supportive of Meyer, saying about him in 1874 that as far as sales of scriptures were concerned he 'stands foremost on the list'.<sup>101</sup> However, there were further complaints about Meyer's Baptist activities and he resigned from his work as a

---

<sup>97</sup> J.D. Hopper, 'Baptist Beginnings in Yugoslavia', *Baptist History and Heritage*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (1982), p. 29.

<sup>98</sup> Milo Imerovski, 'Baptist Origins: The Nineteenth Century in Present Day Yugoslavia' (Unpublished thesis, Ruschlikon, 1986), pp. 58-9.

<sup>99</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1872, p. 64.

<sup>100</sup> J.D. Hopper, 'A History of Baptists in Yugoslavia, 1862-1962' (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary PhD thesis, 1977), p. 12.

<sup>101</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1874, p. 63.

colporteur to give his abundant energy to Baptist mission. Through Meyer, many Baptist churches were formed in Hungary, Transylvania and among the southern Slavs. Millard and Meyer both played a key role in the southward extension of Baptist presence. At the beginning of the 1880s, Millard, although still technically employed by the Bible Society, decided to go to Bosnia-Herzegovina to help with the Baptist mission, becoming a pastor of the Baptist church in Sarajevo in 1884 and working there until 1887.<sup>102</sup> On 31 January 1887 he resigned from his Bible Society post.<sup>103</sup>

The evangelical movement grew rapidly across many parts of Eastern Europe in the 1860s and 1870s. The Bible Society colporteurs were often central to this growth. In Russia the evangelical movement among the aristocracy was of enormous significance for Bible distribution, as were revivals among Mennonites, which eventually produced the movement of Evangelical Christians and Baptists across the Russian Empire. The colporteurs in Bulgaria contributed in important ways to the formation in 1875 of the Bulgarian Evangelical Society.<sup>104</sup> Among those the Baptists influenced in Hungary were members of the Reformed churches and also the Nazarenes. The Bible Society found this group problematic, as they did not consider it right to put the Bible in the hands of unbelievers. But more and more Nazarenes became Baptists and became involved in the wider evangelical movement.<sup>105</sup> In Bohemia, to take another example, colporteurs were in touch with missionaries from the Free Church of Scotland, the Free Reformed Church, the Moravians, the Baptists, the Jewish Society, the Continental Society and the American Missionary Board, and encouraged evangelical co-operation.<sup>106</sup> In Austria-Hungary, as Baptists spread, many of their leaders were current or former colporteurs. The Bible Society wanted to maintain a strictly non-denominational position, but in the realities of Eastern Europe it became a force for the growth of evangelical churches.

## Conclusion

This article has focused on the way in which colporteurs of the British and Foreign Bible Society attempted to operate within the different Christian settings in Eastern Europe. They worked in contexts which were Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant. In Orthodox Russia the progress was remarkable. The 1870 BFBS Annual Report stated: 'Perhaps there is scarcely a country

<sup>102</sup> Hopper, 'A History of Baptists in Yugoslavia: 1862-1962', p. 16.

<sup>103</sup> Canton, *History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, Vol. IV, p. 335.

<sup>104</sup> Canton, *History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, Vol. III, pp. 218-20.

<sup>105</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1873, pp. 85-6.

<sup>106</sup> Edward Millard, 1873 Report to BFBS Secretaries, *BFBS Agents Books*, No. 143, p. 58.



on the continent of Europe in which more ardent friends to the circulation of the Scriptures can be found, and certainly none amongst whom the Bible is received with the same profound veneration and enthusiastic joy as are so frequently evinced by the humbler classes in Russia'.<sup>107</sup> In the period 1854 to 1884 the circulation of the scriptures by Russian Bible Society agents was 4,383,967 copies, in about seventy languages.<sup>108</sup> But in Orthodox and Catholic settings, and even among liberal Protestants, the question of whether those affected by the Bible would continue to support the existing majority churches was a difficult one for colporteurs to answer. Many, especially Baptists, became involved in promoting Baptist life and encouraging those who embraced the evangelical faith to join or even found evangelical churches. Perhaps the response in 1878 of one colporteur to questioners in the Balkans sums up what for many of these colporteurs was the best way to conduct themselves. The colporteur was asked if he believed all the articles of the Nicene Creed. It was a question that could readily have been asked in some form or other in many Orthodox or Catholic settings. He said 'yes', and his questioners were satisfied. He then asked them the question 'What must I do to be saved?'<sup>109</sup> The Bible, for these evangelical colporteurs, had a clear answer to that question, an answer which was true for anyone, whatever their Christian tradition, and when the experience of 'being saved' was embraced it often – though not always – led to these converts finding a home in the new and growing evangelical churches of Eastern Europe.

**The Revd Dr Ian M Randall**, Senior Research Fellow, IBTS, Prague.

---

<sup>107</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1870, p. 130.

<sup>108</sup> Canton, *History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, Vol. III, pp. 363-4.

<sup>109</sup> *BFBSAR*, 1878, p. 108

## **Living Hopefully in a World of Instant Gratification**

Fran Blomberg

Several years ago my husband and I were struck when a bride and groom concluded their marriage vows with the phrase ‘until the death of love parts us’. Despite the ease of communication offered by networking sites like Facebook, the option of replying ‘maybe’ to an invitation leaves us wondering whether five or twenty will come to the barbeque. We regularly counsel students and friends on debt management and the wisdom of buying on easy credit. Like other Americans, we are bombarded daily with advertisements offering new and improved products, urging us to upgrade items that we have, to date, often managed without quite contentedly.

These episodes offer commentary on current perspectives on time, and the corollaries of desire and hope that one’s view of time engenders. As Christianity moves toward the periphery of influence in contemporary American culture, a point of nostalgia or even ridicule is the image of the old-fashioned, bewildered Christian lambasting new-fangled technology and cultural changes. Equally disturbing is the image of the anxious, technology-laden workaholic, not a few of whom populate American churches. What alternative to these two extremes can be offered by a view of time that considers the reality of eschatological hope in the midst of a world hawking instant gratification?

This article will compare and analyse modern and postmodern constructs of time and then discuss a biblical understanding of eschatological time. These sections will not attempt to solve philosophical debates on the nature of time and eternity, but will lay groundwork for the paper’s discussion of a practical outworking of hope. The paper will offer imaginative ways in which the Christian community demonstrates a third alternative to paradigms of control and hopelessness that typify contemporary reactions to the press of time.

### **A Modern View of Time**

A significant aspect of modern thinking is the loss of the transcendent dimension and a bifurcation into rationalistic and emotive strands of thought. Rationalist thinking hypothesises the subject and object of faith as human reasoning. This modern construct of time is dominated by linear concepts of evolution and the idea that the future is a simple continuation

of the present, dependent on the factors available in the present.<sup>1</sup> Foundationalism demonstrates its predilection to measuring and stabilising the impact of factors; calendar time offers quantifiable progress, and keeping a schedule becomes of greater import than nurturing messy, demanding relationships.

The emotivist strand of modernist thinking accepts the claim that truth is known in objective study of factual evidence, yet champions the value of private interpretation of the intangibles of human experience. In this frame of reference, the value and use of time is individually construed. Time becomes a-historical and the goal is to be liberated from the necessity of a past in order to fulfil personal dreams for the future.<sup>2</sup>

Modern economic systems also reflect varying uses of time. Capitalism shows itself as a system of optimism; progress is sure, especially for those that live by virtues of diligence, delayed gratification and investment. The powerful gain by the philosophy that the future will be no more than a continuation of the present; that no novel or unpredictable factors can be entered into the equation.<sup>3</sup> Marxism on the other hand sees progress inevitably accompanied by conflict as the well-resourced further their domination over the poor and the poor collectively resist. The genuinely poor remain present-oriented in their struggle while their leaders redesign the past by creating an “industry of oblivion”, which masks and sustains false reconciliation between individuals and the system that oppresses them’.<sup>4</sup> To be future-oriented is a luxurious privilege of those confident of their survival.

Yet linearity does not in itself always guarantee ‘progress’; the past can be brought to bear on the present in a way that pessimistically denies the ability to change for the better, or requires heavy-handed intervention to mediate progress and betterment.<sup>5</sup> The extremes of Christian pre- and post-millennialism can be seen in these two scenarios. The former would be tempted to withdraw, convicted that the world is becoming increasingly evil; the latter would optimistically but coercively anticipate the ability to humanly install the Kingdom of God in the world.

---

<sup>1</sup> J. Moltmann’s *futurum*, as found in several of his writings, including *The Coming of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> M. Daniel Carroll Rodas, ‘The Power of the Future in the Present: Eschatology and Ethics in O’Donovan and Beyond’, in *A Royal Priesthood?* eds. Craig Bartholomew et al (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), p. 122.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Bauckham, ‘Time and Eternity’ in *God Will Be All in All: The Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann*, ed. R. Bauckham (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999) pp. 170, 171.

<sup>4</sup> Alberto Moreira, ‘The Dangerous Memory of Jesus Christ in a Post-Traditional Society’, in *Faith in a Society of Instant Gratification*, eds. Maureen Junker-Kenny and Miklós Tomka (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999), p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> Ted Peters, ‘The Terror of Time’, *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 39:1 (2000), p. 58.

## A Postmodern View of Time

One might argue for the term hyper-modernity rather than post-modernity in discussing a twenty-first century concept of time. In western cultures, modernity's proclivity toward individualism and human self-sufficiency has extended into a consistent detachment from the transcendent dimension, roots and narrative, and from hope of a common good and a common purpose. Bauman suggests the term 'pointillist time' similar to the artwork of certain post-Impressionists in which the image consists of only points without continuity of colour or stroke.<sup>6</sup> He speaks of time as a succession of events, intervals and interruptions, without a unifying story. Every moment is a possibility but no two moments connect to create a pattern or progress. It becomes impossible to conceive of that which is not instantaneous. One might imagine the fulfilment of a dream with no idea how to get from 'now' to 'then'. There might exist the delusion of being above the need for time ('I can have it all, now; I should be successful immediately based on my desire to be successful'), and a sense of personal failure if instant gratification isn't realised.

The illusion of limitlessness potential engendered largely by the power of the market is concurrent with an a-morality bereft of roots and responsibility toward others. One's progress cannot be hindered by the needs of another, and the least resourced and most vulnerable are left behind in the march of time. Debord speaks of the 'spectacle' and Bauman of 'carnival bonds'<sup>7</sup> in which experience is reduced to intense, fragmented, storyless moments which are populated by participants with commonality but little if any commitment to each other. These exhilarating intervals of brief and brittle bonding are as easily thrown away as they are formed. There are no rules for engagement, no requirements for belonging; but neither is there any concern for those who become discouraged, drop out, or question the premise of the spectacle.

In contemporary western society, with its throwaway culture, its emphasis on the immediate and the instantaneous, its feverish drive to squeeze as much as possible into time as a limited commodity, its fragmentation of time into allocated quantities, and its obsessive organization of time, we live increasingly in the present and its prolongation.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Consuming Life* (Malden: MA: Polity Press, 2007), p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> Originating with Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, the term is picked up by Vincent Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture*. (New York: Continuum, 2003), p. 60. Bauman discusses carnival bonds in *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2001), p. 72.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Bauckham and Trevor Hart, *Hope against Hope: Christian Eschatology at the Turn of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 26.

Modernity reified calendar time and gave ontological priority to days and weeks regardless of the significance of the event occurring in that time period. Postmodernity, on the other hand, has swung the pendulum to the far extreme of reifying the event with no sense of ontological necessity of placing it within a frame of reference, a moral category, or the continuing narrative of a living tradition.

When the present cannot be fulfilling, it is the individual's responsibility to change and adapt without the input and affirmation of community. Adaptation can be done technologically as lasting photos are photo-shopped and letters to loved ones become quick SMS text messages. The need to not only keep up but to stay ahead of trends breeds a mindset that involves more the pursuit of happiness than its realisation; in fact, stopping to enjoy an event, a possession, or a relationship opens one to the fearful possibility of missing another potential finding in the time 'wasted' on the enjoyment of the present. Obsolescence is to be accepted as the norm, pleasure fades even as it is realised. The resultant anxiety causes people to live as if taking continual superficial gasps of air, when in reality they cannot be renewed without long, deep breaths that transcend the moment and connect to the past and give respite from the frantic search for the future.

Fragile bonds as are fabricated in postmodern intercourse are dissatisfying. Humanity is not meant to live with such loneliness and instability. Nothing has the guarantee of longevity, nothing lasts a lifetime, and there is only 'episodic significance'.<sup>9</sup> The longing for security becomes the hunt for survival in a world of constant change without rules, commitment, or sure relationships. The spiral accelerates as there are fewer societal stimuli to commitment and more examples of the high cost of being left behind in the race.

While many have written the ambient anxiety and sense of rootlessness caused by this punctuated view of time, Moltmann provocatively goes on to discuss the 'sin of despair'.<sup>10</sup> One form such hopelessness can take is presumption, in which a person attempts to fulfil by one's own means what one hopes for from God. Idealism and humanism fit this form of hopelessness. Alternatively, there is a temptation that 'consists not so much in the titanic desire to be as God, but in weakness, timidity, weariness, not wanting to be what God requires of us'.<sup>11</sup> This form of despair resists patient activism, insisting in placid resignation that 'nothing more can be done'. It accepts a status quo that is at odds with

---

<sup>9</sup> Bauman, *Community*, p. 48.

<sup>10</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 23-24.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22.

biblical values and brushes aside calls to further justice. It is also the stuff of much multiculturalism and movements that trade genuine concern for others for a superficial claim of tolerance and diversity.<sup>12</sup> Given the inadequacies of both modern and postmodern concepts of time, can a third alternative be posited to promote a viable sense of hope in an increasingly complex world?

## An Eschatological View of Time

### *Inadequate ideations*

Both modern and postmodern (or, hypermodern, if one prefers that designation) ideations of time are inadequate to explain the hope offered by the biblical narrative. Hope diminished as a category of value in Christianity throughout the twentieth century as human advancement in technology posited its lack of necessity and the horrors of increasing violence rendered it illusory. Moltmann revitalised the concept's eschatological essence in *Theology of Hope* in the mid-1960s, and a strong succession of works has since repositied its needfulness.<sup>13</sup> Still, varying orientations toward eschatology and end times have clouded the ability to embrace hope as a critical Christian response to a world perceived to be increasingly inhospitable and hopeless.

A concern for literal understanding of end time sequencing has, in almost a Gnostic fashion, reduced the story to dates and details devoid of transformative significance, and made interpretations of end time events a litmus test for denominational loyalty or even Christian orthodoxy. Others use a premillennial position to justify withdrawing concern for justice and ecology. These believers might approach evangelism with ambivalence believing that it is inevitable that the world will 'go to hell in a handbasket' before Christ returns to redeem his people; others tackle evangelism with fervour, believing Matthew 24:14 to teach that Christ won't come back until the world has been evangelised.<sup>14</sup> Whether by disinterest in or mechanisation of the process of evangelism, both groups risk a disconnected attitude toward the current reality of the Kingdom and the Spirit's transformative ability in individual lives and societies.

<sup>12</sup> Bauman, *Community*, chapter 7, speaks of the ruse by which recognition is given to minority groups without any thought of redistribution or genuine equity.

<sup>13</sup> Highly recommended are: Richard Bauckham and Trevor Hart, *Hope against Hope: Christian Eschatology at the Turn of the Millennium* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1999); Miroslav Volf and William Katerberg, eds., *The Future of Hope: Christian Tradition amid Modernity and Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004); Tom Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (London: SPCK, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> The AD 2000 and Beyond Movement and Joshua Project especially popularised this interpretation as it became seemingly more feasible to map the location and numbers of 'unreached people groups'.

But an opposite problem can distract from the patience hope inspires when Christians mistakenly assume more than a fair measure of responsibility for changing the world according to their understanding of Kingdom values and culture. Liberation theology as well as the modern bias toward material success and progress both encourage Christians to work for change but weaken their ability to see purpose in delay or suffering. Finally, erudite but abstract wonderings about the nature of time and eternity might stimulate the mind, but can simply sap attention and energy that could purposefully be put toward a practical theology of living hopefully in a hostile world.

### ***Toward a sufficient eschatological view of time***

Christianity has the ability and responsibility to provide an alternative system of thought and practice to that provided by the dominant culture and current epistemologies. A biblical view of time will reflect neither the modern tendency to control nor the postmodern tendency to despair. Eschatology is not defined as simply an exposition of doctrines regarding last times, the second coming and the final judgment; it is, in Moltmann's words 'the doctrine of Christian hope'<sup>15</sup> and an outlook or orientation that understands the present in constant conversation with both past and future. This eschatological outlook cannot be divorced from the alterity of the church vis-à-vis the cultures of humanity; 'only someone who finds the courage to be different from others can ultimately exist for others'.<sup>16</sup> Eschatology rightly understood offers a dynamic process for living in times of competing worldviews and allegiances, globalisation and polarisation. Through lived tradition and ongoing interpretation of the times and the Word, the Christian community navigates complex social and cultural situations with stable, but not intractable, practices and beliefs.

Eschatological hope neither denies the reality of injustice nor lives with the illusion of being able to eliminate suffering in a fallen world. Instead it recognises that living in the 'already and not yet' of the Kingdom involves tension between contentment and discontentment, and that a media-driven consumeristic culture will upend biblical priorities. Moltmann summarises it eloquently:

Peace with God means conflict with the world, for the goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present...This hope makes the Christian Church a constant disturbance in human society...Once we have caught in them [the promises of God] a whiff of the future, we remain restless and urgent, seeking and

---

<sup>15</sup> Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 16.

<sup>16</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (New York: Harper and Row), p. 16.

searching beyond all experiences of fulfillment, and the latter leaves us an aftertaste of sadness.<sup>17</sup>

Moltmann himself was grieved that his epic *Theology of Hope* was appropriated for triumphalism, particularly in America, and answered this error with his volume *The Crucified God*, in which he elaborated on the inevitable pressure of living in an age of partially fulfilled promises. While theologians have ongoing debates on whether Moltmann's theology is indeed overly optimistic about the ability of Christians to engage the culture toward change,<sup>18</sup> the basic principle is undeniable: we live in a world that experiences both the progress of the gospel and the growth of evil, and the church is called to offer a tradition of navigation in the midst of this tension. We need a culture of properly placed contentment, rightful hope, and endurance.

Such a culture cannot be produced apart from recognising the ongoing narrative of the people of God, from early biblical history through the present and into the promised future. Christians are a storied people; being properly placed in the continuity of this story is essential for right understanding of hope and contentment. Modern culture has increasingly severed ties with the past in an effort to 'liberate' humanity from the constricts of God and nature; but the cost of this freedom is stultifying alienation and loneliness. When self-defining, people are alone; without a story, they are amnesiacs. Without genuine history people are without memory; without memory, sub-human. A society without respect for history lives in disconnected moments, unable to transition, adapt, or move fluidly between contrasting values and varying cultures. Such a pointillist society must live with the illusive 'hope' that the next moment will offer a panacea or the rectification of wrong that the current moment has produced. These staccato pops of time are inevitably unfulfilling. Individuals who lose the story lose perspective and incentive to live for anyone but themselves. But when eschatology is seen as the shaping of the present by reference to the past and assurance of the future, a genuine community of hope may emerge. The community will be knit together not by necessary commonality of belief regarding the events and timetable of the end, but by the shared practice of interpretation and increasing resilience and trust in each other as practitioners.

---

<sup>17</sup> Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, pp. 21, 22, 105-106.

<sup>18</sup> Curtis George Lindquist, 'The Church as a Christian Community of Hope: A Comparative Study of Moltmann and Hauerwas Using a Cultural-Linguistic Style of Thinking'. (Ph.D. dissertation, Atlanta: Emory University, 1991), pp. 51-53. See also Arne Rasmusson, *The Church as Polis: From Political Theology to Theological Politics as Exemplified by Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), p. 99.



Such discernment is not, of course, wholly open-ended, but is centred in the person of Christ, his death, resurrection and establishment of the church as an ongoing visible witness to the Kingdom he has initiated. The death of Christ bonded Father and Son in the experience of suffering on behalf of humanity, and raising Christ from the dead was God's ultimate way of contradicting the injustice of the present world. One learns from these events that God's desire is not simply the forgiveness of the sins of humanity but reconciliation. The resurrection culminates a long history of covenantal faithfulness exhibited in forming Israel, the exodus, the exile, restoration of the remnant and the life and death of Jesus. From the thread that weaves these events together the reality of God's promise for future reconciliation and new creation is perceived.

For now Christians live in the inaugurated Kingdom, motivated toward 'responsible and hopeful activities in this world, aimed at partial and anticipatory approximations to the coming kingdom with the life of this world'.<sup>19</sup> The Christian community lives under Kingdom values now, noting changes in relationships particularly toward the marginal and oppressed. The church itself is a sign of the Kingdom and 'should not be understood as non-world, but as that part of the world that already has turned to that future and freedom which is on its way'.<sup>20</sup> The reality of the Kingdom stands in contradistinction to the illusion of reality offered by systems of power in current epistemologies, governments and worldviews.

The consistent and coherent biblical story guarantees the future that reaches back to affect the present. We are *not* without roots and *not* without a shared future. Continuity with the past and the mediation of the future both stimulate us to act ethically in the present, according to the character and attributes of God.<sup>21</sup> The God of promise is not seen or heard in all fullness in this world; his word does not peddle instant, tangible gratification. Rather the reality of the present kingdom and its ultimate consummation changes our desires and felt needs. We desire 'instant gratification', not for material objects and the temporal offerings of this world, but desire intensely the reconciliation of relationships and promises of salvation-healing for creation. Christians abide and behave by the values of the Kingdom fulfilled and in doing so resist the allure and addiction to temporary satisfaction from materialism now.

Because it has already been witnessed, particularly in the resurrection, a new and unpredicted advent of God's gracious activity in creation is desired. The Christian community experiences the Kingdom's

---

<sup>19</sup> Bauckham and Hart, *Hope against Hope*, p. 138.

<sup>20</sup> Rasmusson, *The Church*, p. 76.

<sup>21</sup> Carroll, 'The Power of the Future', p. 126.

transformative power now because of the certainty of the future.<sup>22</sup> The future has been achieved and cuts into the present to impact us now, like a runner who wins a race and returns down the track to accompany the other runners across the finish line. This future, while in continuity with the past, is not wholly dependent on it. God has decreed new heavens and the new earth that will rise above any idealistic utopia or humanly enforced communitarianism in unparalleled justice wrought by his creativity and originality. Though corrupted by sin, God's first creation cannot be seen as irredeemable; the new creation will retain all that has already been redeemed in righteousness by the holy Lord. Yet the new creation will complete all that is lacking in *shalom*. People of faith are endowed by the Holy Spirit with the ability to imagine in faith the construct of what is not evident now, and graced by God's peace to persevere in the ambiguity of a world unable of its own accord to realise *shalom*.

A right orientation will see eschatology as a vital influence on the ethical practice of Christianity in the present. Ours is not a fatalistic despair that abdicates action in this world, neither do we idealise our ability to transform society apart from the intervention of God. Hope stimulates without either anesthetising or causing a hypertrophied sense of human ability. The future can be influenced but not orchestrated. What is called for is a balance of an undramatic, faithful obedience and humble, peaceful contentment. We might imagine a dark room representing the present and a sudden flash that illuminates the room ever so momentarily. That's the world's predominant idea of hope—a momentary difference in an eternity of despair. Christian hope is a flash that illuminates the room and shows the presence of a thousand lights ready to be turned on to eternally repel the darkness. Awareness of the thousand lights, and of the qualitatively different light promised in Revelation, compels us to continually seek and enjoy those brief flashes.

## Practical Living in Eschatological Hope

Hope is 'the resilient conviction that the processes of historical interaction are to be understood in relation to some overriding purpose that prevails in odd but uncompromising ways'.<sup>23</sup> The 'overriding purpose', as described earlier in this paper, relates to the promises of God demonstrated in the biblical narrative and awaiting further consummation. There is continuity in the midst of the newness promised by God and therefore an ability to live as a participant in a timeless story that offers consistent, current evidence of

<sup>22</sup> The concepts are Moltmann's *adventus* and *novum*, extensive throughout his works, including *The Coming of God*, pp. 25-29 and *Theology of Hope*, pp. 31-36.

<sup>23</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Hope within History* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), pp. 2-3.

God's presence and activity. There is identity provided by relationship with God; it is diverse but lasting, it can be translated according to time and culture but has a core security that does not require human invention. Hope connects times and events in a coherent narrative that gives meaning and allows the past and the promised future to impinge on actions and attitudes in the present. Alternatives to proffered realities can be imagined, based on the assurance of the ongoing work of God in history. Christians are sure of what is hoped for even when it is not seen (Heb. 11:1). Hope is dynamic, elusive and to some measure inexplicable; without these qualities it transforms into certainty.<sup>24</sup> Hope cannot guarantee against suffering; that would be fanciful imagination or wishful thinking, but it answers suffering with choices to live according to that which can be imagined based on solid evidence and promises of scripture and the character of God.

Living hopefully is enhanced tremendously within the context of a committed community. Committed community respects place and the others who are in that place, while groups based on tenuous and friable bonds of superficial commonality can ignore both environment and its inhabitants. Ethical community would have stable bonds, commitment, obligations, fraternal care, and durability. Such commitment is anticipated throughout scripture and is characteristic of the eschatological community. With the oversight of the Holy Spirit, Christians can be intimately involved with each other without a dependency on coercion or totalitarian rule.

Conversion is itself an act of hope. It implements the possibilities that God has available through his Kingdom, and anticipates new life and the new creation. To convert *to* Christ is to convert *from* allegiance and dependence of the world's power systems. Likewise baptism moves the believer from old habits and illusions to new life. In describing the meaning of baptism for African-American slaves, Wilmore writes, 'the eschatological hope of the gospel and the intense desire to be delivered from the painful reality of present woes were compressed into a single, dazzling moment of transcendence...'.<sup>25</sup> The Eucharist as well speaks to the infinite potential of the gospel to transform the present.

'For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes' (1 Cor 11:26). The promise of a return, the hope of parousia—that Christ will come again and be present as at the first coming—brings this juxtaposition of time to the meal, redeeming the present because of past fulfillment and transforming the present through the hope of future expectation.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Jacques Ellul, *Hope in Time of Abandonment* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), p. ix.

<sup>25</sup> Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Last Things First* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), p. 81.

<sup>26</sup> Glen Olsen, 'Time and Expression in the Eucharist' *Worship* 80:4 (2006), p. 317.

It is remembering the future, Olsen says, that imparts reality to the present.<sup>27</sup> In preaching, a major task of the prophet is 'to mine the memory of the people and educate them in the use of the tools of hope'.<sup>28</sup> This training in imagination offers language to resist prevailing perceptions of reality and energises people to embrace an alternative vision for the world by naming the evidence of God's present work in the world.<sup>29</sup>

As well as through conversion, the sacraments and preaching, the community is capacitated to hope through intentional training in discernment and interpretation. As a community of moral discourse,<sup>30</sup> the narrative and texts of the community are read with a view toward their completion in ethical behaviour now.<sup>31</sup> The process of discernment and subsequent living out the claims of the text is the life of dynamic hope and expectation. Adherence to the norms and narrative of the biblical story is not restrictive, rather the disciplines entailed increase the capacity for hope much like learning the discipline of a craft gives freedom to practice it imaginatively.

This creativity shows itself as the hopeful community reaches out to communicate its alterity in both the character of its people and its actions.<sup>32</sup> In a world dominated by uncertainty, increasing isolation, and disregard and even fear of others, the Christian community can advance tactics against these dominant mindsets. As defined by de Certeau, 'The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power...a tactic is an art of the weak.'<sup>33</sup> Yet tactics need not be insignificant actions; from outside the mainstream the Christian community can exemplify values and virtues that persuasively witness to viable alternatives to mainstream thought and practices. The church well engaged in the world can offer 'the eschatological *hope of justice*, the *humanizing* of man, the *socializing* of humanity, *peace* for all creation'.<sup>34</sup>

Living toward justice and peace, in full view of institutions and powers, is an obligation as well as a privilege. 'No one should, on Christian grounds, abandon hope in the costly work of witness to the structures of society, or indulge in a nonselective antipathy to whatever any government

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 319.

<sup>28</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Minneapolis: Fortress), p. 64.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., especially pp. 59-67.

<sup>30</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), p. 131.

<sup>31</sup> Lindquist, 'The Church as a Christian Community', pp. 16-20.

<sup>32</sup> Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 109.

<sup>33</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 36-37.

<sup>34</sup> Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 329, italics his.

anywhere proposes'.<sup>35</sup> Hope allows the believing community to work towards forgiveness, reconciliation and liberation from oppression. Hope gives strength for patient resistance and for bearing the consequences of pacifism. Revelation instructs that when the Lion of Judah appears to open the scroll, the worshippers shout 'worthy is the lamb that was slain' (Rev. 5: 5-6), disporting that suffering and sacrifice are significant influences on history, and that coercion or force are not the methods of the Kingdom. Jesus' death and resurrection has already formed an eschatological, priestly, royal people to follow his ways and model his methods. Thus the allure of the immediate is foregone and the needs of others within and outwith the community are considered as the people of God continue in the narrative of reconciliation.

The ability to forgive and be forgiven is an essential component of living in genuine hope. This is no mere politeness or indifferent tolerance. Forgiveness motivated by hope not only recognises sin, grants pardon, and ceases resentment, but adjusts the community to protect from further transgressions and re-injury. '...To care for a brother means bearing his burdens: his limitations, his hurts, his mistakes, and ultimately, if the relationship becomes truly redemptive, the crushing weight of his sins.'<sup>36</sup> Unlike the mindset of a competitive consumer society, there is no fear of loss when the hopeful community slows down and offers a second chance, for this community recognises the lasting value of reconciled relationships. The community living in hope can be inclusive without fear or self-protection, assured that the Kingdom is expansive enough for all to be included.

As the expectation of faith fulfilled, hope encourages the believing community to live with risk and insecurity, conducting itself according to sacrificial norms that dispute the necessity of self-promotion. The community takes chances on the outcasts of society and chances extreme generosity with its resources and time.

The hopeful Christian community prefers simplicity and sacrificial living to the allure of media and market. It possesses a freedom that does not limit options but changes desires. It is marked by undramatic, faithful contentment, upending culture's call to detach from commitments and incessantly seek better options and momentary pleasures in ever changing environments. Instead, stability is welcomed and intentionally cultivated.

It is no use rediscovering any of our church's roots, nor discerning innovative ways to be faithful to our church's calling, if we will not slow

---

<sup>35</sup> James Wm. McClendon, *Ethics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), p. 176.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Casey, 'The Value of Stability', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 31:3 (1996), p. 310.

down, stay *longer* even if we can not stay *put* indefinitely, and take something *like* a vow of stability. Slow down – because postmodernism may really be hypermodernism. Stay longer – because there is no way to discern God’s will together without commitment to sit long together in the first place. A vow of stability – because it is no use discerning appropriate ways to be Christian disciples in our age if we do not embody them through time, testing, and the patience with one another that our good ideas and great ideals need to prove their worth as communal practices.<sup>37</sup>

Other practices of a hopeful community include tending the earth in anticipation of its completion, rather than seeing it as a throw-away utility. Committing to marriage and bearing children surely count as acts of hope. Foregoing consumption for its own sake, preferring to cultivate the gifts and creativity of sharing resources responsibly also characterises the community of hope.

## Conclusion

The contrasting views of time between modern, postmodern and biblical thought are stark, and the implications of each view are weighty. We cannot neglect our past and cannot manufacture our future. The practices of the hopeful Christian community offer genuine options of lifestyle over against illusions of being able to produce sure outcomes in history or despair at having no influence on its course. While culture proffers the elixir of instant gratification, assurance that the biblical narrative illustrates God’s ongoing presence and actions, and the reality of the future fulfilment of God’s promises, influences his people to hopeful living in the present.

**Fran Blomberg** is a doctoral student at IBTS, associate pastor at Scum of the Earth Church in Denver, and adjunct faculty in Intercultural Ministries at Denver Seminary.

---

<sup>37</sup> Gerald W. Schlabach, ‘The Vow of Stability: A Premodern Way through a Hypermodern World’ in *Anabaptism and Postmodernity*, eds. Susan Biesecker-Mast and Gerald Biesecker-Mast (Telford, PA: Pandora Press, 2000) p. 303.

# Encountering deaf people and Levinas

Sandra Daktaite

We cannot have room for God if we do not have room for our neighbour.... Find space for spontaneity and a generous response. Find a place to welcome the stranger and to throw back your head and laugh with God.

Thomas Hoffman<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

I first encountered deaf people personally in the Portikas centre<sup>2</sup> a few years ago, and found the encounter discomforting. It was difficult to explain or give a sound reason for such a reaction. Nevertheless I realised that many others around me had some kind of similar experience of uneasiness. In trying to understand my immediate reactions I came up with something like this: 'I encounter the other that is different, strange, unknown, scary, crossing the borders or, on the contrary, hiding, separate, unordinary, challenging, someone who is not me or not the group of people that I am familiar with'.

My aim in this article is to show that we are purposefully placed to live with others in our world, with those who are different than we are and in this way we may know God more, who also comes to us as a *stranger*, as someone who is revealed and yet still remains a mystery. We cannot hide or escape from that *other*<sup>3</sup> or forcefully try to build a society made up of only desirable people, whatever that may mean today for places such as my home country of Lithuania.

Agne Domarkaite, a social worker specialising in the issues of deafness, proposes turning to ancient Greek thought and practice regarding encountering the deaf.<sup>4</sup> The Ancient Greeks had a saying – 'in the healthy body, a healthy soul'. What can a person do if he or she cannot change or 'improve' one's body, if the 'imperfection' of the body is there to mark one's birth-given identity? For many 'imperfect' *strangers* it meant that

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.inwardoutward.org/2011/09/19/room-our-neighbor>, accessed 2 October 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Portikas (Eng.: *Portico*) is a theology, philosophy and art school in Klaipeda, Lithuania; one of the public institutions that, alongside other things provides space for communication of those two worlds – deafness and hearing. For more information visit: [www.portikas.lt](http://www.portikas.lt) (in Lithuanian); I will be referring to Portikas in the first part of this article.

<sup>3</sup> I am using the term 'other' in Levinas' sense. I will be exploring the notion of 'otherness' in the second part of the essay. Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Agne Domarkaite, 'Prevention of Social Communication Interferences among Deaf Pupils and Their Pedagogues in the Secondary School of Deaf and Hard of Hearing' (Master's thesis. Supervisor Dr I. Klaniene. Klaipeda University: Klaipeda, 2011) (in Lithuanian), p. 5.

they were not accepted, there was no space left for ‘defects’, children born with disabilities were often killed. However, in later ages different attitudes towards disabled people appeared. With the development of medicine there came an attempt to fix the defects.<sup>5</sup>

Yet it has never been easy to accept somebody who is different, unconventional, and *other*, whether that *other* was defined by physical condition or mental abilities. How we see and approach someone who is different raises questions about the nature of human existence. One cannot assume that destructive approaches toward others are only a matter of the past;<sup>6</sup> each generation has its dangers and the imperative for humanness, which philosopher Emmanuel Levinas expresses in ‘Thou shalt not kill...’,<sup>7</sup> is a commandment that we read, face and encounter in each one’s face.<sup>8</sup> It is our responsibility to learn to live with others, to accept and, when needed, to defend the freedom of being different.<sup>9</sup>

In line with Emmanuel Levinas, Jonathan Ryan mentions that in the scriptures we find outcasts: ‘widows’, ‘strangers’, ‘poor’, ‘orphans’ – all in some way different from what we think we are or what the norms of our human structures allow, and then, strangely enough, God’s interest in those particular others.<sup>10</sup> We may recall Old Testament commands to welcome the stranger, to give food and shelter<sup>11</sup> as well as the New Testament stories.<sup>12</sup>

The theme of difference is the leading motif through this article. This motif will be disclosed through describing the experiences of meeting deaf people. My goal is to introduce the mission school Portikas, to widen my understanding of deafness through engaging with the book by Lou Ann Walker, *A Loss for Words*,<sup>13</sup> and to outline possible theological interpretive approaches for understanding deafness in missional engagement considering Levinas’ concept of ‘otherness’.

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> In connection with disability, eugenics may be mentioned – the extermination of the ‘undesired’ population groups may be seen as a part of it.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Thou shalt not kill...’ is Levinas’ phrase that he uses in reference to the OT command in Ex 20:13 and Deut 5:17.

<sup>8</sup> ‘The face is what one cannot kill, or at least it is that whose *meaning* consists in saying: “thou shalt not kill”.’ Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, p. 87.

<sup>9</sup> It also raises the question of how such defence can be done in a non-violent way. Because of the limitations of space, however, this question will not be explored in this article.

<sup>10</sup> In the prefatory note explaining the use of the term ‘the other’ - Jonathan Ryan, ‘Like bread from one’s mouth: Emmanuel Levinas and reading scripture with the other’, *Journal of the Melbourne College of Divinity*, Vol. 21, No. 3(2008), pp. 285-306, 242, 286,

<http://search.proquest.com/docview/215123030?accountid=48132>, accessed 11 October 2011.

<sup>11</sup> E.g.: Exod 23:9; Deut 24:17-22.

<sup>12</sup> E.g.: Matt 25:31-46; Lk 10:25-37.

<sup>13</sup> Lou Ann Walker, *A Loss for Words* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987).



## Meeting the deaf in and through Portikas

I want to begin with a boy named Matas,<sup>14</sup> who liked the animals in the creation story. In Portikas a table theatre performance about creation (Gen 1-2) took place. When I asked Matas, what did you like the most from the performance, he answered – the animals. That's how I remember him – the boy who likes animals. Matas is a 6-year-old boy and both his parents are deaf. All three of them came to the performance as they would come for other events in Portikas.

Portikas is a mission school. It connects theology, philosophy, arts and social sciences. It is a meeting place and a space for dialogue. It is a place for creative approaches to life and for creative ways of living life meaningfully. Portikas is situated within the church building, but it is not the church itself. People from the church come and people from outside the church come; all of them are on equal ground as they raise questions and look for answers, to develop their personal journey, to live hopeful lives and to look for ways to engage in society. The school started in 2008 in Klaipeda. Missionaries Henrikas and Gilija Zukauskas founded it in a search for embodiment of their missionary call and vision. The school has activities in theology and philosophy, in choreography, and in visual arts. The art classes were a helpful bridge to communicate with deaf people, when they came to the school and joined in the activities.

Several deaf people participated in all the classes – theology, drama,<sup>15</sup> visual art and choreography.<sup>16</sup> Some joined for the summer women's day camps; some would come just for the performances or to the different celebrations in the framework of Portikas (e.g.: the beginning and the end of the school year or the joint Christmas Eve gathering with Klaipeda Evangelical Baptist Church). Knowing how the hearing and deaf worlds tend to be separated within the society at large and by the deaf people themselves,<sup>17</sup> it is noticeable to have these connections, although the communication is not easy and often limited.

Now I want to return to Matas and his mother, who paints beautifully and participates in the dance performances in Portikas. She and her

---

<sup>14</sup> The name has been changed to protect his privacy.

<sup>15</sup> In the first years of the school, drama classes were offered as a separate subject (in line with others); later it became more interconnected with choreography.

<sup>16</sup> For the article *Portico is a shelter as for hearing as for deaf people* written by former Portikas student Agne Domarkaite, see the homepage of the deaf people association in Lithuania at [http://www.lkd.lt/enews/id-3-news-portikas\\_prieglobstis\\_tiek\\_girdinciam\\_tiek\\_kurciam.html](http://www.lkd.lt/enews/id-3-news-portikas_prieglobstis_tiek_girdinciam_tiek_kurciam.html) (in Lithuanian), accessed 9 October 2011. There a reflection on the Portikas study year of 2008-2009 can also be found.

<sup>17</sup> I am stating this from my personal experience and from the experience of people working with deaf people in the social institutions in Lithuania.

husband are both open to and share in the goodness of their surroundings. One could see how wholeheartedly they love Matas but at the same time how they are from one world, but not from the other and how they need to accept and to live with that gap between the hearing and deaf worlds. One could see Matas' wide-open eyes, his childish curiosity and still, in some way, his uneasiness being in the hearing world, which is different than the world of his family. Matas encounters these two different worlds at the same time and that is building the treasury of his life experience. The question is – am I or are we ready in some way to be like Matas? Are we ready to step into such a conversation, to find that this person who is different than I is the one whom I essentially need to understand myself, my community, the world and, maybe, ultimately – God?

## The experience of being different

In order to engage more fully with the world of the deaf I will be referring to a book about the first-hand experiences of a hearing child raised by deaf parents: *A Loss for Words* by Lou Ann Walker.<sup>18</sup>

I come to this book again from the perspective of what it means to be different.<sup>19</sup> There could be another discussion dealing with the specific questions of disability which I am not going to enter here.<sup>20</sup> How can the knowledge of the differences help to perceive the other that we face in the deaf person? It will not remove all hindrances, but it may clear the way or even make the way between us and the other that we encounter in a deaf person. The word *different* or *other* appears in almost all literature one may find about deaf people or about the culture of deaf people.<sup>21</sup>

‘My parents are deaf. I can hear. And the fact of their deafness has made all the difference. It has altered the course of their lives, of my life, of their families’ lives’<sup>22</sup>, starts Walker in the Prologue. ‘In a way we were

<sup>18</sup> For other examples of works based on biographical stories of deafness, see Marlee Matlin, *I'll scream later* (New York: Gallery Books, 2009) or Emanuel Laborit, *Cry of the Gull* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> Concerning the history of deaf people basic facts may be found at <http://www.kurtieji.com/kalendorius/0> (in Lithuanian), accessed 2 October 2011; on deaf history in USA, see John Vickrey Van Cleve, *Deaf History Reader* (Washington: Gallaudet University, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> It is worth saying that some would perceive deafness as a disability; others would argue about specific deaf culture and language and would not see deafness as a disability. A good introduction may be found in Wayne Morris, *Theology Without Words: Theology in the Deaf Community* (Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 4-12.

<sup>21</sup> Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, *Deaf in America: Voices from a culture* (Cambridge/Mass./London: Harvard University, 1999), p. 2. The attempt to portray the richness of the deaf culture in America may be found in this book. It is also helpful to read the first footnote in the article by Marcel Broesterhuizen, ‘Faith in Deaf Culture’, *Theological Studies*, Vol 66 (2005), p. 304, describing the terms ‘deaf’ and ‘deaf culture’ from the Deaf community’s standpoint.

<sup>22</sup> Walker, *A Loss for Words*, p. 1.

outsiders, immigrants in a strange world', she continues. One of the important themes she mentions is that of communication. 'The inability to hear is a nuisance; the inability to communicate is the tragedy.'<sup>23</sup> For a long time deaf people were forbidden to use sign language. It was assumed that for deaf people to integrate in society<sup>24</sup> they needed to learn techniques of speaking and lip-reading.<sup>25</sup> That cut off many deaf people from their naturally learned first language which is a language based on sign.

Only in 1995 was sign language in Lithuania acknowledged to be the official vernacular or mother-tongue language of deaf people.<sup>26</sup> That presupposes that methods of education that were used before often came from the hearing people's perspective. For a deaf person to learn Lithuanian or English or any other language is as difficult as to learn a foreign language with specific grammar, vocabulary and complicated syntax. Hearing people assume that a deaf person knows the language, and merely cannot speak it. And here is one of the errors. Children up to the age of two are like tape recorders. If a child is born deaf, he/she does not hear verbal language and does not know how to use it.

Writing about her mother's experience, Lou Ann mentions that in her mother's case 'sign language was never a subject taught in class, and although it was used openly, it was considered something of a guilty secret, a crutch for those who couldn't master speech'.<sup>27</sup> Referring to Lithuania it could be said that even now when sign language is acknowledged to be an official language of deaf people, deaf children are still often taught by hearing teachers, who know sign language insufficiently or do not know it at all. That obviously creates difficulties in the educational process and relationship, and results in an inability to take full advantage of education.<sup>28</sup>

One may critique sign language, seeing in it simplicity and primitive ways of communication. Here Walker would reply very clearly: 'In some hands, signing is an art equal to an actor's rendering of Shakespeare'.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>24</sup> For more on the specific problems of integration in America, see Tracy Ann Morse 'Seeing Grace: Religious Rhetoric in the Deaf Community'. A Dissertation. The University of Arizona, 2005.

<sup>25</sup> 'For centuries there have been two distinct attitudes about how deaf people should be taught: The oralists believe in speaking and lip-reading without ever signing; and the manualists are pro-signing in American Sign Language (ASL)'. *A Loss for Words*, pp. 28-29. 'Manualists who supported the use of sign language often grounded their arguments in Protestant theology, while oralists who were influenced by Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* grounded arguments in evolutionary thinking', states Tracy Ann Morse in 'Seeing Grace'. The argument follows that 'religion has provided the deaf community with a powerful language to convey their authority in struggles to preserve sign language'.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.kurtieji.com/kalendorius/> (in Lithuanian), accessed 2 October 2011. See also [http://pagava.lt/patarimai\\_seimoms\\_3.php](http://pagava.lt/patarimai_seimoms_3.php) (in Lithuanian), accessed 15 October 2011 – on the history of deaf people's education in Lithuania.

<sup>27</sup> Walker, *A Loss for Words*, p. 29. See also Morris, *Theology without Words*, p. 29.

<sup>28</sup> For more information on the subject see: Domarkaite, 'Prevention of Social Communication'.

<sup>29</sup> Walker, *A Loss for Words*, p. 47.

Sign language has both a capacity to express concrete as well as abstract ideas. Moreover, sign language points to things that are forgotten in the hearing world. Rebecca Sanchez<sup>30</sup> remarks that embodied language has been largely neglected. Those who can hear tend to put a lot of emphasis on verbal communication while not paying enough attention to body language.<sup>31</sup>

The story of a wedding at the end of *A Loss for Words* illustrates and widens this observation. The author, Lou Ann, faces the incapability to interpret the whole beauty and depth of the speech given in sign language by her father during her sister's wedding. 'My interpretation was inadequate. My father's signing was graceful and expansive. It had the beauty of a conductor leading a symphony orchestra. There was nothing clichéd in what he signed. No translation could have been as expressive or as moving as the way he drew his hands through the air.'<sup>32</sup> Facial expression, movements, sense of space are a part of sign language. That opens up a whole new reservoir of the depth of meaning and expressions of meaning.

These observations lead to a wider understanding of language and communication. Padden and Humphries introduce the notion of encountering each other that goes beyond language: 'Hearing children of Deaf parents represent an ongoing contradiction in the culture [of the deaf]: they display the knowledge of their parents – skill in the language and social conduct – but the culture finds subtle ways to give them an unusual and separate status'.<sup>33</sup> It is an example of the differences that are immense in human connections and relationships, the differences that sometimes are even unbridgeable, no matter how close people are to each other. Having said this, I will continue with introducing Emmanuel Levinas and his understanding of *the other*.

## Emmanuel Levinas

French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas was born in Lithuania in 1906 and died in Paris in 1995.<sup>34</sup> He was influenced by his teachers Husserl and Heidegger as well as by the historical setting of his time – both World Wars, emigration to Russia and then to France, the system of Nazism and

---

<sup>30</sup> Rebecca Sanchez, *Embodied Language: Deaf Theory, Visual Poetics, and American Modernism*. Dissertation. State University of New York, 2009.

<sup>31</sup> A helpful reference may be: Domarkaite, 'Prevention of Social Communication', p. 19, describing the elements of non-verbal communication in reference to deaf people.

<sup>32</sup> Walker, *A Loss for Words*, p. 205.

<sup>33</sup> Padden and Humphries, *Deaf in America*, p. 3. The brackets are mine.

<sup>34</sup> For biographical details, see Michael Purcell, *Levinas and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 3-4.

the experience of the Holocaust. Levinas was both a philosopher and a religious thinker. Levinas himself kept his philosophical work and his writings on Scriptures and Talmudic texts separate. Nevertheless it could be suggested that philosophy and religious texts found a meeting point in Levinas and influenced each other, at least implicitly.

Levinas is a thinker in the phenomenological<sup>35</sup> tradition, but he would have some struggles with this tradition. It may be said that he goes further than the phenomenological tradition. If the phenomenon is something or someone that appears and can be a matter of examination, than Levinas' *other* is not a phenomenon, but an enigma, something that cannot be grasped in terms of understanding and sense of ownership.<sup>36</sup> There is always space for the unknown and mystery in the other.

'The neutralisation', Levinas writes in *Totality and Infinity*, 'of the other who becomes a theme or an object – appearing, that is, taking its place in the light – is precisely that other's reduction to the same'.<sup>37</sup> Levinas would use the term ontology for 'any relation to otherness that is reducible to comprehension and understanding'.<sup>38</sup> To know ontologically is to know the other, the existent, stranger as a subject.<sup>39</sup> But the other is not knowable ontologically; it cannot be reduced to the same. Otherness disappears if it is taken and put under my whole pervading understanding.<sup>40</sup> That is why metaphysics needs to precede ontology in Levinas' thought.

In relation to the other, the one is not or I am not a theoretical spectator from outside the world but acting in the world and thinking in the world; not totalising (not making others the same as me, not stating that I know the other somehow completely) but accepting the ethical relation in terms of infinity.<sup>41</sup> Here we come across two more important words for Levinas – ethics and infinity. Ethics always comes as a responsibility for the other I encounter. Before I am approached I am responsible for that other: even if I do not know that other yet I bear this responsibility. In these conditions ethics is more than knowledge; it is not only the reflection upon the other, but active response. One may not know the response unless or until that person meets the other in this active mode. Practical involvement is essential here. The term 'infinity' is an important one for Levinas as

<sup>35</sup> Levinas: 'Phenomenology describes what appears' in Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, p. 85.

<sup>36</sup> Simon Critchley, 'Introduction' in *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas* [electronic resource] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 8, about the ethical relationship to the other person.

<sup>37</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 43. 'The same' is Levinas' term which refers to perceiving the 'other' as someone that can be understood or grasped, the contrast term for 'the same' is 'the other'.

<sup>38</sup> Critchley, 'Introduction' in *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>40</sup> Critchley, 'Introduction' in *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, p. 15.

<sup>41</sup> Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 194-201.

well. Critchley states that for Levinas it is important to see other human beings having the idea of infinity. He writes that ‘this idea, by definition, is a thought that contains more than can be thought’.<sup>42</sup> There is always something that I cannot grasp fully in another human being. For Levinas ‘transcendence is very much part of this world and not part of some other-worldly mysticism’.<sup>43</sup> Here we see Levinas returning to real life situations and experiences again. It is not mysticism in the way that it separates people from the world, but it is rooted in the world.

Levinas uses a phrase that is striking in regard to the topic of deafness – a ‘face-to-face’ relation.<sup>44</sup> Speaking about metaphysics ‘a being is in a relation with what it cannot absorb, with what it cannot, in the etymological sense of the term, comprehend’.<sup>45</sup> This kind of relation with the other person is called a ‘face-to-face’ relation. The Holocaust experience and the death of multitudes (‘faceless face in the crowd’) forces Levinas to think about the other, ‘you’ who is higher, more than my equal.<sup>46</sup> It means that ‘you’ is more than the idea of the other in me. The other comes with the reality of infinity. ‘The relationship to the Face is both the relation to the absolutely weak [...] and there is, consequently, in the Face of the Other always the death of the Other and thus, in some way, an incitement of murder [...] – and at the same time (and this is the paradoxical thing) the Face is also the “Thou shalt not kill”’.<sup>47</sup> Throughout Levinas’ work ‘Thou shalt not kill’ remains an important and normative phrase.

When asked about philosophy and religion, Levinas makes a connection between the concern for the other and the relation to God. ‘In my relation to the other, I hear the Word of God. It is not a metaphor; it is not only extremely important, it is literally true. I am not saying that the other is God, but that in his or her Face I hear the Word of God.’<sup>48</sup> The relation to God is closely and essentially connected to the relation to another person. ‘You encounter God intimately through the other. There is no greater intimacy.’<sup>49</sup> The other is not God, but ‘in the guise’<sup>50</sup> of the other we encounter God.

<sup>42</sup> Critchley, ‘Introduction’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, citing Levinas, p. 14.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>44</sup> For deaf people to see the face in communication is essential. If you cover your face, you are cut off from any communication. Morris, *Theology without Words*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>45</sup> Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 80.

<sup>46</sup> Critchley, ‘Introduction’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, p. 14.

<sup>47</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous* (London/New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 89. For the reference to the phrase ‘Thou shalt not Kill’ see footnote nr. 7.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>49</sup> Michael de Saint Cheron, *Conversations with Emmanuel Levinas, 1983-1994* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2010), p. 33.

<sup>50</sup> Levinas’ term.

It could be said that Levinas' writings are important for theology, showing direction and renewal. Purcell writes that Levinas 'offers to theology a new voice, a new grammar of response and responsibility, a new lexicon for articulating the human in its tendency towards the divine which, for Levinas, cannot avoid an ethical commitment to the other person here and now'.<sup>51</sup>

## Deafness, otherness and theology

In this section I wish to draw connections between what has been said so far and indicate points for further development. How do you approach someone who is different? How does Jesus deal with the other? This other cannot stay passive. This other asks for a voice. We see Jesus in the Gospels responding to these cries and shouts, but not enslaving them. He touches but at the same time his touch is full of freedom. That is what fascinates. It is a relational act with space for otherness.

Human connections are a part of what it means to be human although sometimes it is more comfortable to have 'borders'. Nevertheless, interactions are there and, I wish to argue, they are essential. As Levinas helpfully points out, the other is normative for me; he or she invites me to make a response, which is always a response to the face that speaks to me 'Thou shalt not kill...'; Levinas' otherness provides a good starting point when we think of or when we approach deafness. The other that we meet in a deaf person, is the same other that shows his/her face to us and for which we carry responsibility. At the same time the other is not reducible to full, complete comprehension.

I suggest that otherness becomes clearer and even more demanding when we find ourselves meeting someone who is not outwardly, culturally or in some other sense similar to us. If we take it seriously this encounter leads us further. We become able to see otherness in our fellow human beings, even in those that I am familiar with. It provides a needed bridge to think about difference, about the other human being, whom I cannot reduce to a totality.

Gospel stories often speak about Jesus who comes as a *stranger* Himself. We see Him as our fellow human being and at the same time as a stranger. Seeking to follow Jesus we need to meet the other who is different and a stranger to us today so that we might meet Him more authentically.

---

<sup>51</sup> Purcell, *Levinas and Theology*, p. 3.

## Conclusion

In the first part of this article I described my encounter with deaf people in and through Portikas. This encounter served as a basis for going deeper into understanding deafness. The question of deafness was approached through the motif of being different. I have suggested that we constantly need to meet those who are different. In this way we may become more accepting, to meet God who is known, who is revealed and at the same time remains a mystery, even more than we can comprehend.

Through Levinas' insights on otherness the claim was developed that meeting the other who is different prepares us for meeting every human being as the one that cannot be reduced to a totality or sameness, who is different than me and who *asks* for my response. That will shape our ethical standpoint towards others and the world.

**Sandra Daktaraite** is a student at IBTS. She previously served as Secretary of the Lithuanian Baptist Union and was involved with Portikas.



## Book Reviews

### ***A New Kind of Baptist Church: Reframing Congregational Government for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

Brian Winslade

Morling Press, Macquarie Park, NSW, Australia, 2010.

ISBN 978-0-9806421-3-1

Brian Winslade is an outstanding Baptist leader who has ministered in New Zealand, was appointed National Leader, then served with the same title in Australia. He has been senior pastor (or his preferred word, leader) of one of the largest churches in New Zealand. The book is a re-working of his Doctor of Ministry dissertation from Bethel University in the USA.

Brian has been influential within the Baptist World Alliance Church Leadership Commission and he and I have debated some of the issues he raises regarding church size, professional teams and decision-making patterns in a BWA Forum. Without question, Brian is the best thinker, writer and speaker I know on looking at the ecclesiology of large Baptist churches and trying to think through the implications within a theological framework that baptistic people can understand. He is, at heart, a passionate missiologist. He is concerned to work with the institutional church, but he believes we need to work out fresh models for decision-making which focus on vision and mission for larger Baptist churches. He and I come to the challenge of refreshing ecclesiology for the current age from different perspectives, in that, elsewhere, I have argued for smaller baptistic churches where true *koinonia* can be experienced, out of which a missional strategy can come. Brian sees the place, indeed promotes the vision of larger Baptist churches, well resourced, but believes they are often encumbered by having a congregational polity which makes for ineffective decision-making and mission.

He rehearses classic congregational government and explores its weaknesses. He asks the question about this model – does it work in large churches? – ‘no’. Is it appropriate amongst all cultures and ethnic groups? – ‘no’. Does it really fit the changing ecclesial scene in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? – ‘no’.

With his concerns established, he has four chapters reviewing issues of mission, the structure of the New Testament Church, Bible norms of leadership and authority, and his biblical critique of Baptist models. This is not ground-breaking work, but very helpfully summarises the state of discussion amongst missiologists and ecclesiologists who show some interest in congregational-type structures.

His final four chapters offer an alternative model of governance based on the work of John Carver. This is important and often-used material within not-for-profit organisations. Taking this work, he explores the framework of a large Baptist church, which he describes as the 'shopping centre church', and the issues of leadership and authority in such a church, exploring the vexed area of how ordinary believing members can participate in decision-making.

From this he constructs a model of strong leadership, where leaders are really allowed to lead. To provide a check, these large churches need a body of Elders who hold the leaders (pastors) to account for their actions. The senior pastor is, according to Brian, to be seen as analogous to the CEO of a not-for-profit organisation in the John Carver governance model. In such a setting he advocates a dramatic move away from a form of democracy which turns the church meeting into a political debating chamber governed by rules and procedures. Here, I am totally at one with him. The democratic church meeting, voting on everything, is not very Baptist, nor New Testament, but I am not yet convinced that Carver provides the only, or best, way forward. Nevertheless, if you belong to a large Baptist church this is an important book to read and reflect on.

**Keith G. Jones**  
Rector, IBTS, Prague

-----

***The Development of Russian Evangelical Spirituality: A Study of Ivan V Kargel (1849-1937)***

*Gregory L Nichols*

Pickwick Publications, Eugene, Oregon, 2011.

ISBN 978-1-61097-160-7

Ivan V. Kargel, known in German as Johann G. Kargel, is a significant and towering figure in the development of evangelical church life in the 'old' Russian Empire and in wider Slavic lands, and Greg Nichols has placed us all in his debt by this careful study of his life, theology and spirituality. Kargel's articulation of Christianity and his doctrinal formulations still prove to be highly influential amongst Russian Baptist Christians more than seventy years after his death, and to have this study in English, based on Nichol's doctoral dissertation, is to gain a very valuable tool in understanding Russian Baptist theology and spirituality.

Nichol's cogently argues that Kargel's theology was shaped by the Keswick Holiness movement and though Kargel never visited Keswick for the meetings, he imbibed a Keswick spirituality. His theology was neither Calvinist nor Arminian, but following the spiritualism of Keswick, Kargel held to a doctrine of sanctification by faith which involved suffering.

It is generally accepted that Russian Baptist life had three birth places – in southern Russia with the Stundist movement, in Tbilisi (Georgia) and in Saint Petersburg amongst the aristocrats who focused around Colonel Vasily Pashkov. Kargel had links and was involved with all three movements and this, perhaps, accounts for his significance.

Nichols gives us a helpful history of Kargel, whose father was most likely German and his mother Armenian. He may have had a Turkish passport from his time in Bulgaria, which was then ruled by Turkey. Kargel experienced an evangelical awakening around 1869 and became part of an embryonic Baptist church in Tbilisi where both Russian and German were spoken and to which Martin Kalweit and other Baptists came from Klaipeda as they looked for work. Kargel's potential as a speaker and evangelist was recognised and he was sent from Tbilisi to Oncken's mission school in Hamburg.

Nichols explores Kargel's work in episodic chapters covering his three periods in Saint Petersburg, Bulgaria and his extensive travelling ministry. There is a helpful section on his lecturing in the Bible College in Saint Petersburg established by Prokhanov, which gave Kargel the epithet as the 'ablest evangelical theologian in Russia of his generation'. The appendices helpfully include a timeline, maps and his statement of faith. Nichols has made important use of letters between Pashkov and Ivan and Anna Kargel which have not previously been used by others writing about Kargel. From this important and impressive work, the wider evangelical and Baptist community will certainly gain a significant understanding of the emphases of Russian Baptist life today, which has grown out of the ministry of this key figure. This book is a must for anyone seeking to engage with Russian Baptist Christians.

**Keith G. Jones**  
Rector, IBTS, Prague

-----

***Prayers of the People***

*Karen E. Smith and Simon P. Woodman, eds.*

Oxford: Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Studies of Regent's Park College and South Wales Baptist College, 2011, 238pp

ISBN: 978-1-907600-07-4

Festschrifts tend to be collections of academic writings on subjects relating to the work of the persons who they are celebrating. What does it suggest about the person, then, whose festschrift comes out as a collection of prayers?

*Prayers of the People*, written in honour of John Weaver, until recently the Principal of South Wales Baptist College, includes prayers for various occasions and on various themes. However, they do reflect his long-time interests and passions, particularly his concern for the creation and the desire for integration of faith and ordinary life. The collection has one introductory essay – that of another long-time former British Baptist college principal, Paul S. Fiddes and one time colleague of John at Regent's Park College, Oxford. Paul Fiddes writes carefully on a theology of public prayer, reflecting on the practice of 'praying through the reading' from a Baptist perspective. The rest of *Prayers of the People* is, as the title suggests, the prayers. Varying in their literary quality, these prayers reflect numerous local situations and in this sense represent a fascinating record of common Baptist worship in a contemporary context. It is worth noting that twenty two of the contributors are women, though several of these have multiple entries.

The sections of the book represent classic categories – prayers of gathering, confession, intercession, etc., reflecting a spectrum of different types of prayers which should (even if they do not always) mark the life of a local church. There are also prayers for specific liturgical seasons and special services, and a very short, last, section of 'Prayers of Sending Out'. The shortness of the latter can serve as a highlight for the need of further work on our theology of the interface between the church's worship and mission, thereby illustrating Weaver's concern for the integration of faith and life.

Those who would like to use this resource in the worship life of their own church will likely need to develop their own system of identifying the particular prayers they need, as apart from the aforementioned general categories there is no topical index, which would have indeed been helpful for locating specific issues and occasions.

This volume is a testimony to the gifting, passion and contribution of John Weaver to European Baptist life, theological education and worship and the desire of so many to mark, with gratitude for service rendered, his move from full-time stipended ministry to a different kind of service to the Baptist and wider Christian community.

**Lina Andronovienė and Keith G. Jones**  
IBTS, Prague